

Quadrant

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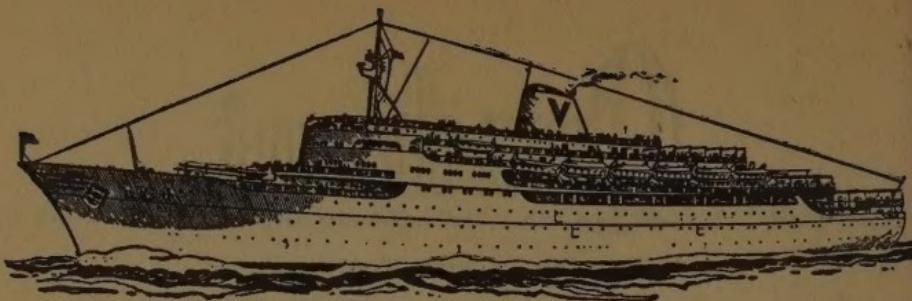
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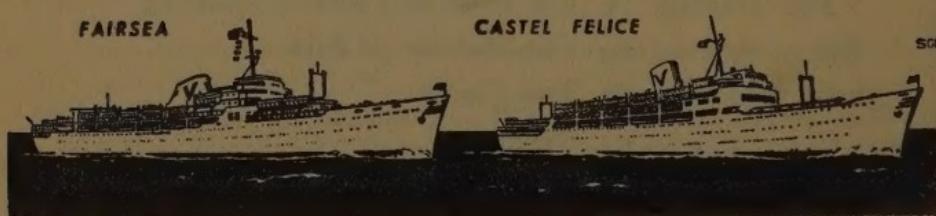
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COMMENT

A NEW SPRINGTIME OF HISTORY?

WHAT if, for a mental exercise, we cast aside the customary prognostications of deepening gloom, and entertain instead the thought that the long dark winter of modern history may be near its end and a new springtime at hand?

So far the twentieth century has suffered all the ills stored up for it in the nineteenth. Our social problems are the fruit of the industrialization and commercialization it spread through the world. We have fought the terrible wars which it prepared. Huge masses of men have trampled down freedom and decency, moved by its characteristic ideologies: the mystique of Nationalism; Class War and Communism; the myth of the Superman; Racist pseudo-science—

*All, all, of a piece throughout:
Thy Chase had a Beast in view;
Thy Wars brought nothing about;
Thy Lovers were all untrue.*

Are there no positive factors, equally carried forward from the last century's efforts, which might yet prevail and bring in a period in which humanity will be less tormented and abused than in the past?

Certainly there are. Science and technology have produced the means of abolishing hunger and reducing disease all over the world. Automation is eliminating whole categories of jobs that dehumanize the worker, and restoring intellectual activity and responsibility to industrial labour. After many false starts we have begun to understand a little of the economics and politics of justice. A new generation is arising that has developed some immunity to the mental pestilences of the past age. Even the non-Western peoples who have caught this infection late from us are having a rapid course of disillusionment.

Admittedly, Communism is still advancing, like the last Mammoth. It may crush and devour more peoples, including ourselves, if we do not watch out. But it is not the vanguard of the evolution; it is an archaic monster living on borrowed time, wracked by internal diseases and moving on arthritic bones. Still terrible and cunning, it is also a colossal bore.

We do not wish to minimize the dangers of the unsolved problems. Necessarily these must be our chief pre-occupation. But men need hope as well as awareness of peril if they are

to win the future. To wallow in fashionable prophecies of doom and annihilation is to encourage a passivism which might rob us, and our children, unjustly of better things:

'Tis well an Old Age is out,
And time to begin a New.

VOSS AND THE NOVEL

PROSE fiction has always existed in some form, but in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it became chiefly a new thing, 'the novel', whose characteristic themes are class, money, sex, and morals, and whose characteristic method of presentation is a detailed naturalistic verisimilitude. The method is also called 'realism'; but all major literary art is fundamentally realistic in intention, even though its method of presenting reality be fable, allegory, symbolism or romance; the naturalistic approach merely registered the feeling that 'reality' was chiefly to be found in social and psychological vicissitudes as immediately experienced. The novel fitted a 'bourgeois' age, and its method was in keeping with the growing prestige of empirical science and philosophical naturalism.

Today there are many signs of an increasing discontent among writers and critics with the novel, a questioning whether its day is not passing, and whether prose fiction must not now undergo a fresh mutation if it is to correspond to the deepest preoccupations of contemporary man. Looking back, one can see that certain imaginative geniuses have in the past wrestled with the novel to make it transcend its ordinary limitations. Dostoevsky took the crime story and turned it into a means of interpreting the spiritual crisis of his age. Melville in *Moby Dick* produced a powerful enigmatic 'myth' of good and evil. Proust's early delight was in *The Arabian Nights* and also the memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon, and, though he embarked on a novel, he wrote at the end that perhaps his work after all combined something of those first two enthusiasms. Joyce moved from the novel to a kind of profane liturgy of the religion of art. Lawrence tried to make the novel a fluid, fiery rendering of the passionnal depths that underlie and disrupt the congealed structures of character and social institutions.

Patrick White's *Voss* has entered Australian literature as a work in this line of meta-novelistic creation. The customary procedures are subdued to an aim transcending naturalistic fiction. The theme is the contest between man's oldest and his second oldest religion: between man divinized by God through

COMMENT

love and humility, and man aspiring to self-divinization in the place of God. The mental setting is the German Romantic version of this theme, as mirrored in the mind of Voss—a world of thought which White renders with uncanny fidelity in all its enthusiasms and ironies. The physical setting is nineteenth-century Sydney and the unexplored Australian continent. The symbolism of this poem-novel-myth is never merely schematic, but subtle, opalescent and tantalizing. Moments of visionary intensity abound, as when after rain:

Over all this scene, which was more a shimmer than the architecture of landscape, palpitated extraordinary butterflies. Nothing had been seen yet to compare with their colours, opening and closing, opening and closing. Indeed by the addition of this pair of hinges, the world of semblance communicated with the world of dreams.

A conceit? Yes, but a *congetto metafisico* of no mean order.

We leave it to others, or to another time, to evaluate the complex work at leisure, not all aspects of which may prove to be of equal merit. What stimulated us to this editorial comment was the disturbing thought: is there any body of work by an Australian poet that has the depth and sustained poetic vision of this prose writer? The very things that White undertakes with such distinction are things which have been the normal business of poetry. Yet the poetic forms now chiefly in use, with one exception, do not lend themselves to the large-scale presentation of a significant human action or situation examined in all its levels of psychological penetration, satire and irony, pathos, and moral and metaphysical significance. The exception, or would-be exception, is verse drama. Strenuous efforts have been made, both by writers in this country and abroad to revive this as a valid form for general theatrical use, but it does not seem that the problem has been solved.

QUADRANT IN FASHION

WHEN we were choosing a name for this magazine—much the most exhausting of the preliminary tasks—a friend criticized QUADRANT as a name because it was too square and masculine a word, and therefore unlikely to attract the more culturally-developed sex, who have to be convinced that this is the kind of magazine which should naturally be found on those odd little tables in contemporary-style houses where gracious and informal living is practised. We feel that our choice has now been vindicated by the emergence recently of a 'Quadrant' style in women's dress.

AT THE ENTRANCE

Douglas Stewart

God knows what beat him down into that deadland
Of weed and wild green water; it could have been,
We thought at first when we came round the headland,
The ferry had collided; or, unseen,
Some giant comber from the outer ocean
Swept in and sunk the ship on that bright day;
And huge and high indeed in green commotion
The harbour entrance swirled, and there he lay.

We saw his body floating near the surface,
The waves washed over it and he was dead
And all the sea was filled with planks and corpses
And one swept past us in a mass of weed.
Wreckage and death on that bright water heaving!
Yet he at least still rode his raft of planks
And steadily now through the great waves was moving:
The craft that towed him in had all our thanks—

Though Lord he was still no more than food for seagulls!
Still washed by the waves, that long-limbed body lax,
That gaunt white head that might have been beast's or idol's,
Strange, obscure, suffering, like a head of ice,
Stiff and abandoned. The tow-rope through the water
Gleamed straight and gold, hauling with easy speed.
Far, far behind lay all that green disaster,
And now in the last of the swell he moved indeed:

Some stir, some shudder of life was in that body.
We saw his hand move, fumbling the rope that bound him,
The harbour broadening around him, clear and steady;
And hugely, heavily, out of the sea that drowned him,
Warming our hearts as life now warmed his blood,
He clambered, striving to rise, until at last
Upright upon the moving raft he stood,
And on into the distance and the mist.

THE IMPRESSIONABLE YOUNG SQUIRREL

Dal Stivens

A N IMPRESSIONABLE young squirrel was busily nut-gathering one summer's day when he was distracted from his labours. Two schoolchildren were learning verses by rote beneath his oak tree and the squirrel heard:

*Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying,
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.*

The sing-song rendition had an hypnotic effect on the impressionable young squirrel and what he heard entered his mind with the singular force of an imperative.

'Rosebuds, eh?' he cried. 'I'm nuts to be gathering nuts in May. Rosebuds, here I come!'

A worldly old owl who had eavesdropped on the young squirrel's conversion flew off, hooting derisively.

The young squirrel went forthrightly to work. His zeal was so great that he even contrived by an effort of will to resist the blandishments of a number of nubile young female squirrels. 'Gather ye rosebuds!' they invited him, white teeth gleaming and soft velvet noses twitching.

'I am!' he replied and caused them to shake their pretty little heads sadly.

When winter came the young squirrel's larder was crammed full.

The other squirrels regarded his exertions with considerable scorn and were not above indulging in a little laboured paradoxical punning at his expense.

'You're nuts not to gather nuts!' they jabbered at him.

And: 'You're a nut loose—a ton of them, in fact!'

And: 'You're cracked.'

To all this tiresome badinage the impressionable young squirrel turned as deaf an ear as possible and comforted himself by repeating, 'Gather ye rosebuds. . . .'

Winter closed in and possessed the forests; snow drifts invested the squirrel's tree fortress; icy winds launched themselves, wailing, among the branches.

Inside the squirrel curled up in his furry coat and ate from his rosebud store.

'The poet was obviously right,' he congratulated himself. 'The taste is perfumed and better than that of nuts. And, what's more, I'm getting plenty of greens.'

The young squirrel's delectation continued for some weeks during which his fur grew glossy. At the end of that time, however, he began to chew his rosebuds with diminishing pleasure.

'I must confess that my diet palls a little,' he said. 'But, of course, there's never a rosebud without a thorn.'

A week later he told himself: 'Could I have heard aright? Surely the poet would not mislead me?'

By the time spring burst on the woodland the impressionable young squirrel was almost ready to return to his old diet of nuts. But the poet's words still held his imagination.

'I am very reluctant to think that such a wise man did not speak sense,' he told himself. 'If it does not make sense, then why did the children say it over and over to remember it and why do I remember it, too, with such pleasure?'

In his dilemma he went looking for the ancient owl to get his advice. On the way he was repeatedly obstructed by sprightly young female squirrels who chattered excitedly about his handsome appearance. The young squirrel resolutely ignored their blandishments and eventually found the old owl who awoke, blinked rapidly and remarked:

'How splendid your fur looks! It's obviously due to all the ascorbic acid you have absorbed with your rosebuds. Not bad, uh?'

'Ah, but there's a rub,' said the squirrel and explained.

The owl listened gravely and at the end, unhooked one wrinkled claw and waved it towards a bevy of young female squirrels who were chattering gaily together on the branch of a huge tree.

'My poor young friend!' said the owl. 'Those'—and he shook the claw—'those were the rosebuds the poet meant!'

'Oh, no!' cried the dismayed young squirrel. 'I could weep for the time I've wasted.'

And he leapt away towards the branch with its garnish of beauty. The elderly owl watched him go and observed: 'The silliest nuts often possess the sweetest kernels.'

INDUSTRIAL DESIGN COMES TO AUSTRALIA

TEAPOTS AND TELEGRAPH POLES

Peter A. Hunt

THE SEA-GOING visitor to Australia is not likely to enthuse about what he sees on arrival at Fremantle. So it was with me, an Industrial Designer from Britain. Recalling the impression made it seemed that there were double the number of poles mounting wires than in my homeland. I remember also, furniture being moved in an open truck. Then came the realization that this was a country getting things done and caring little for sensitivity.

That was nearly a decade past. What of the intervening period? True the poles are still there, but ordinary people are becoming aware of new cultures and new outlooks bringing considerable change, often typified by 'nice things in the shops now', and 'pretty big building going up'.

Industrial Design has arrived in Australia despite its journey taking considerable time.

From a designer's point of view the outlook in this country has never been brighter than it is now. A number of businessmen want a lot of their equipment designed, often because they have a competitor who has, and not because they understand the validity of good design.

There are signs that the gargantuan tortoise of government policy has opened a favourable if heavily closeted eye to the efforts of the only professional Society of Industrial Designers. This same Society has been able to bring nearly to fruition the little publicized Industrial Design Council of Australia, and enrolment in Industrial Design Courses at colleges offering such tuition is at its peak.

Many other pointers indicate that Australia on a comparative scale is advancing rapidly in its consideration of good design policies, but despite this heartening assessment there are many dangers to be aware of. The ordinary life of the ordinary man is still horribly overshadowed by bad design putting about him such a cloak of repressive monotone that he is often not even aware of it.

Days commencing in semi-consciousness, struggling to turn off the intrusive alarm clock by means of a small inaccessible

lever, prove that the creator of the noisy timepiece arises only after a natural awakening. What of the early morning shave? Could we not allow our ordinary man just a few more inches of space around the washbasin for his modest number of toilet articles? And does the excellent toasting device need to announce with such noisy exuberance that its contents are ready for consumption, placing itself in supreme command of conversation or blissful quiet?

It is barely necessary to think of the drive to the office to recall the drunken electric poles with their tangle of wires defying all sense of order, or the new advertising sign screaming its command in gleaming two foot letters, or the new office block nearing a height of architectural bad manners. Here the cloak is more than monotone; it is positively aggressive.

If these are the experiences of the ordinary man then Industrial Designers are humanitarians charged with the duties of correcting however slightly the balance of these sociological disorders, and it is to these designers that the lot of numerous duties falls whilst our ordinary man must help himself where he can.

Dividing the responsibility, both groups, the buyer and seller as they irrevocably are, must give prolonged thought to the use to which an object is put and the surroundings into which it fits best. The plea is not for individuality but anonymity; things should fit a pleasant way of life.

Street signs should announce not scream, advertisements should inform not exhort, buildings should fit and not be monuments to the owners, motor cars should carry passengers from A to B in comfort and not be foibles of class fashion, kindergartens should be places for constructive play not monuments to colour consultants and mothers with Victorian romanticisms of prancing lambs. Schools may well be inspiring technological masterpieces of design and construction not serried rows of barrack-like hutments, and universities probably require buildings of simplicity and serenity.

The list of ill-fitting examples is endless but dare we end on this note of awakening? I think not, and it may well be that a reader or two will ask what then can I do to assist? And the simple brief answer is, THINK.

This frightening age of specialization is ever narrowing the human being down to an inarticulate nonentity and, although we may not be happy to admit it, positive thought and conversation are shortening as the years progress, necessitating an urgent appraisal of our decision-making moments.

We do not think enough about the choices we make.

When our ordinary woman is to buy a teapot, does it pour well (how many try it at the point of purchase?), can it be easily cleaned or washed out? does it fit into the normal surrounding of the home? is the material it is made from liable to damage? does the handle 'get hold' of the bulk of the liquid and enable an easy wrist and arm movement in pouring? does the lid fit well and easily and does it fall off when tipped for the last of the liquid? does it have unnecessary formed rings and curves, or is it of simple shape? will the colour be suitable? will it hold on average the amount of tea required? does it require decoration? if so does the decoration seem simple and unobtrusive? One teapot: does this prove the necessity for clearer thinking about today's decisions?

Having proved that the Designer's responsibility is high, businessmen may shelter beneath the half-proffered wing. Let them, for surely in a thinking community they are only the means to an end and not the formidable characters we may be led to believe. One teapot—what of the hundred other things that surround us in our daily lives, the handles, cups, windows, chairs? Perhaps we are near the cause of what is so readily called a lack of responsibility: could it be that leadership is our problem here?

Let us leave our ordinary woman to her nation-building decisions and observe again our ordinary man, travelling a million miles betwixt rest and labour, often over shocking roads and in transport that is usually proof that most people just do not care about their environment.

Journeying with him we leave our ordinary family at a front gate often so low as to be stepped over or so difficult to open and close that it usually remains open; our walk along the street is a nightmare scene of individualities of housing, from boxlike structures with icing decoration to cliché modern, planned to show the world the occupant's personal habits via large windows. If wet weather, no civic father provides a shelter while waiting for the bus; if dry, transport authorities say bus stops should be away from what meagre shelter the general store's awning provides. If shelter there is, it can usually be typed as the building labourer's masterpiece or concrete worker's evidence of what he does not know of his material.

Then the bus itself laden with passengers who, because they are human, must crowd the only entry and exit. And the ride? The designers of these little suburban buses never intended the overloading' they receive or expected the tracks against which they pit their inadequate strength.

With the shackles of claustrophobic feeling cast off, our ordinary man waits for the more reliable of his transport. Reliable? Perhaps this is because the system is bigger both physically and in administration and tends to play down to complaining but amorphous clientele.

Once in our railway carriage our ordinary man must subservce to the eating habits of a late running clerk or to stupid chatter of office girls packed into the too few entrances and exits. No planner here thought of seats to face all one way, alas; forced inspection of the ordinary man opposite is kind to neither.

Then the arrival at a station with its name high on a pole or fixed to a wall, both so placed as to defy immediate reading, and what of the typography? All capital letters giving two fast running horizontal lines when both upper and lower case letters would be easier to read through dirty, wet or—at night—reflective windows. (A thought here for all States in the Commonwealth to unify their road signs).

At last, freedom to walk, talk and gaze in the intensely noisy channels known as thoroughfares; thorough in what sense, one wonders.

Permit our ordinary man to cast off his aggressive mantle for a while, for it is but morning and he must wear his cloak through the day. The department store window, pleasing in design and appealing, finds a niche in his heart aching for beauty and order; suddenly a small blue delivery van impresses him with its purposeful function, having doors opening parallel to the pavement enabling easier cartage.

Rounding a corner the jeweller's shop with its imported watches and clocks brings a sign of pleasure, for here a foreign country has announced its character of Beauty with accuracy. Crossing his path our ordinary man notices a perambulator with wheels in fine proportion to its body, well sprung, and highly finished, wholly beautiful in its humanitarian purpose.

Springing from impressions of speed and efficiency, immense satisfaction is felt as a youth parks his motor scooter in an otherwise restrictive area. But the place of labour looms, and the cloak shrouds again; once inside, little colour and still less daylight help to secure the mantle of monotone. Even the sales girls' chatter is welcome, as one last appealing thought emerges—what can I do about all this?

In 1957 a group of prominent designers along with a number of leaders in the community met at the Australian National University to discuss ways and means of setting up a Design Council; they made themselves responsible to one another to

INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

obtain reports and statistics about Design organizations in all parts of the world, enabling them to assess the state of Design in Australia. As it happened it was not hard to find out from a national point of view what was happening in this country. The problem soon became what to do about a complete lack of awareness of good design on a national basis.

This same group—often criticized for inactivity—continued to meet, heartened by official government attention, and the acceptance by Mr Essington Lewis, C.H., of the chairmanship, as well as an invitation of the Vice Chancellor of the University mentioned, to stage a formal inaugural meeting of the Council at the University.

Considerable progress has placed the Council in a position to advertise for the first full time staff and the appointment of a director is imminent.

What is this Council to do? Clearly its main activity is to inform and educate designers, businessmen and public. How it will do this is conjecture at this stage but informed opinion suggests that initially design information centres will be needed. Such centres would maintain specialized libraries, with lists of designers and records of their work, and space for conferences. They may well send out lecture groups and specialized information, using various media.

This same enlightened opinion also suggests that as these centres grow they will need to display examples of good design as well as promote both Australian and overseas exhibitions with kindred purpose.

Should emphasis be needed on any one factor in this proposed activity the question of finance is paramount. As in many parallel endeavours, money will be needed, and it is to industry that the chance will be offered; for this is a new drug for the hearts of the twin sisters Commerce and Manufacture.

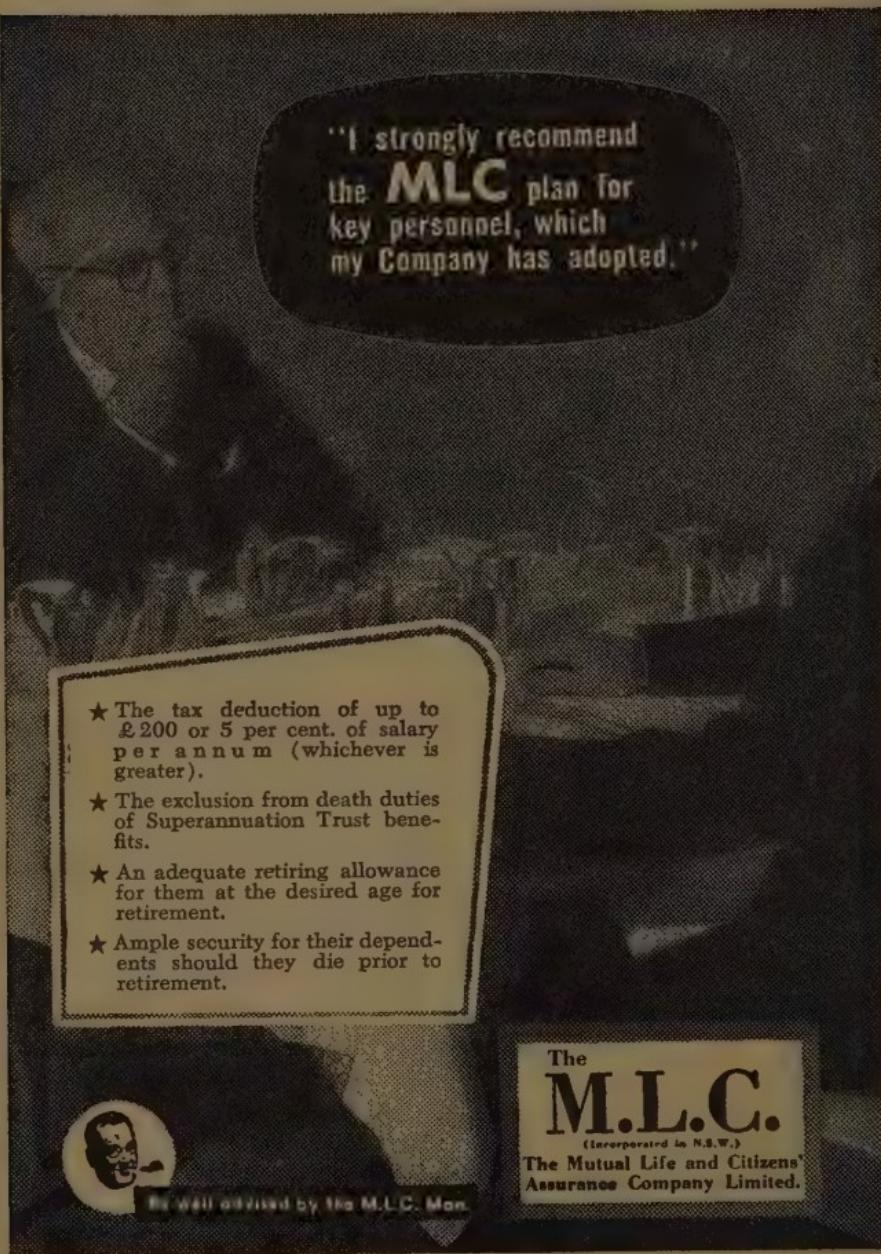
As in the United Kingdom, will a proportionate number of true industrial visionaries take up yet another challenge?

Peter A. Hunt

The artists can make a general vision of things possible, provided they are disinterested and sincere and have a free spirit, and provided they repudiate servitude, whether that of money or that of political parties or—perhaps worst of all—that of their own spiritual disorder and their 'opinions'.

Gino Severini, THE ARTIST AND SOCIETY, 1946

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LETTER FROM SEATTLE

M. K. E. Read

DUWAMISH, Nisqually, Samamish, Snoqualmie, Snohomish—the names which ring Seattle on the map sound like a roll call of Custer's opponents. The landscape of fir, alder and maple, the forest trails veining the wilderness of mountains, the lakes, the ice-cold streams and heavy torrents are a child's dream of Crockett country. But it is now one hundred and six years since Chief Seattle induced 'Doc' Maynard to establish a trade store on the shores of Puget Sound, and a small community of twelve adults and twelve children has grown to a city of half a million people. The frontier has moved north, somewhere beyond Vancouver, British Columbia; four-lane super-highways cleave the forests; the world's longest floating bridge spans Lake Washington, and the tops of the hills between the Sound and the Lake have been washed away to accommodate the rows of neat, middle-class houses.

Seattle is built on hills—'more hills than Rome'—a characteristic which it shares with San Francisco, and like that entrancing city it was once a free-living port in the classical nineteenth century American tradition. The nearest port to Alaska, it boasted one of the largest brothels in the United States, a Skid Road gaudy enough to satisfy the taste of Hollywood and a Mayor whose political effrontery is like a distillation of those rowdy years. But the Seattle of today has mellowed; indeed, some of its citizens, regretting the noisy past, might say it has declined. Corruption may reach astonishing proportions in the Teamsters' Union, but the Box Houses with their private rooms, their sequinned girls and tinkling pianos have disappeared from the waterfront. In the year 1958 it is illegal to sell liquor within a mile of the University campus.

Today the city's advertised attractions are mostly of the open air variety. The bays and inlets of Lake Union and Lake Washington are crowded with the masts of trawlers, fishing smacks and yachts. In summer the locks connecting the lakes to Puget Sound are filled with cruisers, outboards, craft of a hundred styles and degrees of opulence; and once each year, on Gold Cup Day, monstrous hydroplanes from Detroit and Seattle race at fantastic speeds on the inland waters. Television carries the struggle to a million homes and the citizens remember the champions as long and as lovingly as Australians cherish the memory of any winner of the Melbourne Cup.

The city is a park where traffic tunnels under elm and dogwood. Fir and hemlock, rhododendron and madrona cover the shores of the lakes. It is a city of homes, not houses. In winter it is a city of magic, a world in a crystal, fragile and shining, clothed in white silence. At night, from the crests of its hills, its lights burn with a bewitching radiance like the jewelled eyes of a hundred thousand phoenix.

Next to this considerable natural beauty, Seattle takes pride in the immense Boeing Aircraft Company which pours out three million dollars a week in wages and supports perhaps as many as one in four of the city's inhabitants. Indeed, you may hear the expatriate intellectual from the eastern seaboard refer disparagingly to Seattle as 'the Boeing Empire'. He may remark that the city grew on the proceeds of vice and continues to exist on the proceeds of international tension; and he will tell you that the whole country west of the Mississippi is a cultural wilderness, Main Street grown fat and booster-grouped to hideous proportions. He denies the rugged independence of the pioneering fathers and looks on them as refugees from civilization, misfits whose descendants—grown comfortable—are dedicated to the ends of John Dewey. And sometimes you feel he may be right. The city withdraws behind the magnificent mountains; you breathe a soft and timeless air, living your days in a world which is filled with lambent water and the muted understatements of the northern light; and unless you subscribe to the *New York Times* the affairs of nations seem as far away as from any Pacific island.

Yet Seattle is part of the national scene, twentieth in the list of the country's cities. Its people and its institutions carry the colours of the national cultural pattern, and where you place Seattle depends on how you see America.

For this you might select a hundred different traits. Departing British correspondents tell you that you have come to the land of Gargantua, to the commercial culture dedicated to the inessential. It is the land of the other-directed, of salesmanship and getting ahead, of Greek Letters and Queens for every product and every occasion, the land of buy now and pay later, of Madison Garden religion and Miltown. But these phrases protest too much. The Englishman feels that those who speak the same tongue should be recognizably English. He can accept the peculiarities of his continental neighbours, but in this country he is perturbed by differences because they are unexpected: the common language stands behind the things he sees and reflects them like a distorting mirror.

LETTER FROM SEATTLE

No one in Seattle owns a mink-covered television set; and Miltown cannot be obtained without a prescription. The cars streaming down Montlake Boulevard are longer and more powerful than necessary, hued like peacocks and glittering with chrome like dime-store jewellery; but hardly one in ten is a 1957 model. Dave Beck may have bought diapers, silk shirts and golf balls by the gross. His home is the centre of a feudal compound occupied by assorted relatives and bodyguards; but most of Seattle's citizens live unpretentiously. The homes in Laurelhurst, on Queen Anne and on Hawthorn Hills sit complacently in their squares of lawn, confident of the approval of the editors of *House and Garden*. Elsewhere they face the streets with an air of worn respectability, sometimes a little down-at-heel but not without hope. They know they have already sheltered many families who have progressed from Chevrolet to Chrysler, from a fenced-in yard to a patio where Pop, in a comical hat, barbecues steaks on Sundays. And at a time when audiences for the domestic product are declining, Seattle can support three cinemas showing foreign films. The city has no permanent theatre; but it is possible to see more plays in a single year than in Sydney, produced and acted with professional polish by students of the School of Drama at the University. There is a wealth of music, provided by the Seattle Symphony, by the world's great quartets and by composers on the faculty of the University. The city is the home of Graves and Tobey, leaders of the Northwest School of painting who suffuse their canvases with the mystic qualities of the northern light; and it possesses an Art Museum whose collections reflect the civic interest in the Orient.

In Seattle you feel that you are close to the American dream. It is too young a city to possess an aristocracy like Philadelphia and Boston, and most of its people were born in other parts of the country. There is an easy familiarity in the manners of its citizens; those who serve you are courteous without subservience. The girl in the drug store and the cashier in the supermarket say 'Hi' when you approach them, a greeting which rings with a ready lightness of spirit, free of the overtones of social distance. It is a pleasant surprise, until you begin to suspect an ulterior motive in the national emphasis on affability. Men in public life, from President to the smallest local politician confront you from the pages of the newspapers, the glossy magazines, with a perpetual grin. The nation seems to be obsessed with teeth, and it occurs to you that the white smile, the easy manner are weapons in the arsenal of salesmanship.

For competition places a premium on the appearance of confidence, and the ideal American face, like Lewis Carroll's cat, seems to hover over everything with a disembodied and tiresome ingenuousness. Then you are carried away by the charm of the next person you meet. You are enchanted. The streets seem to be filled with people for whom the truths of 1776 are still self-evident. The warmth, the openness are genuine. Perhaps this man in the silk suit and the jaunty straw hat is a potential Willy Loman; but change the scene and you may find his equivalent sitting across from you in the London tube. For Willy Loman speaks for the human spirit; his tragedy is not peculiarly American. He passes by, and the vast vitality of the country carries you on like a cleansing tide.

This is what you feel in the sparkle, the wine-like air of this northern city. It is easy enough to disagree with America, and the things that others have disliked are present in Seattle. It is annoying to be told by the natives that you will like everything that the country offers; and resenting the implication that you are privileged to be there, you are liable at times to lose sight of the nation's virtues. You take a particular pleasure in cataloguing its faults, and as you mentally cut it down to size you find yourself using the same epithets, the stale phrases which countless others have employed to measure their superiority. But even as you form them you begin to reject them, because they do not do justice to the reality.

America's faults, its vices, its excesses are not peculiar to America, but their expression is distinctive: they bound, they boom taking their measure from the country. The question of scale is all-important in passing judgment. And where does one find the scale to measure such an assemblage of opposites? How do you hold in steady perspective such an enormous variety of views? Gross materialism rubs shoulders with simple virtue; the commonplace individual may reach the highest political office, but the integrity of an obscure person may withhold power from the hands of the bigoted. You may turn with distaste from the spectacle of Nixon weeping before an audience of millions; you may deride the simplistic optimism of the Reverend Norman Vincent Peale and deplore the embarrassing sexuality of Bishop Fulton Sheen, the commercialized appeal of Billy Graham. The levelling processes of the educational system fill you with disquiet. Ignorance is unashamed in a land where a college education is considered the key to successful living; poverty is a sore in an economic system which has achieved mankind's highest standard of living.

LETTER FROM SEATTLE

But you may well ask can it be otherwise? America cannot be measured by anything less than the human spirit: it is her special virtue that she attempts to be something to all men. She is disordered, anxious, sometimes shoddy and ungenerous, often uncertain; she can be narrow and impatient. Yet she is also altruistic, tolerant of man's frailty and dignified with the beauty of ideals. She is above all hopeful, and she is never less than human. It is because of this that others can take advantage of her: her humanity is a weapon in the hands of her enemies, and men should bleed for themselves when hatred, ill-will and bigotry force her into untenable positions. If you love mankind—that amalgam of contradictions, that uncertain and searching spirit—you cannot be indifferent.

Seattle is a part of this marvel. It is a place for young people, where the countryside continually awakens the mind to a consciousness of perfectability. The pinnacles of the Cascade Mountains lie behind the city like a challenge, their white slopes beckoning the individualist. The hanging valleys offer the solitude necessary for reflection and a thousand miles of water await discoveries of the spirit. From Seattle you view America as a magnificent experiment, plagued like all experiments by the inadequacies of human nature and human knowledge. You must be fearful for her; the heart must hope for her success. For if she fails it will be the failure of all men.

M. K. E. Read

Amongst democratic nations the sources of poetry are grand, but not abundant. They are soon exhausted: and poets, not finding the elements of the Ideal in what is real and true, abandon them entirely and create monsters. I do not fear that the poetry of democratic nations will prove too insipid, or that it will fly too near the ground; I rather apprehend that it will be for ever losing itself in the clouds, and that it will range at last to purely imaginary regions. I fear that the productions of democratic poets may often be surcharged with immense and incoherent imagery, with exaggerated descriptions and strange creations; and that the fantastic beings of their brain may sometimes make us regret the world of reality.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA*, 1840

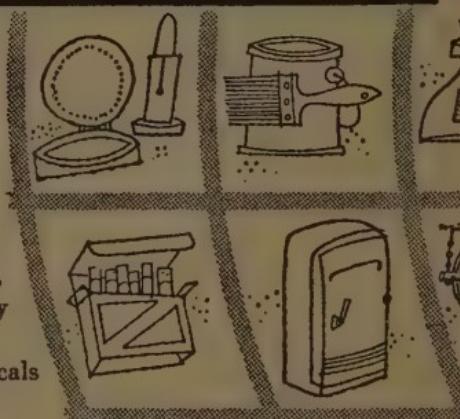


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THE FATHER

Salamon Dembitzer

AT ABOUT the time of my fourteenth birthday I began to get acquainted with life, but not yet to understand it at all. Although I had already had some fairly hard knocks, I continued to stare in astonishment and to find everything marvellous. Yes, even the blows. . . .

Such in those days was the measure of my innocence.

At that time most of my life was spent in seaports, and I would wander round the harbour, through the alleys and in and out of the taverns, suffering the pangs of hunger and dreaming dreams. . . . Oh, those everlasting dreams.

Such in those days was the measure of my simplicity.

One cold winter's night I was sitting in a remote tavern watching the customers as they ate sour pickles with dry rolls, played cards and argued about the size of the European ports. They were down-and-out seamen, ex-waiters and all sorts of derelicts who had been washed up here. They all claimed to have been everywhere and to have seen the most impossible things. Each tried to outbid the other in his boasts; it really was fun. . . .

Suddenly I got the feeling that somebody was studying me carefully. It was a man of about forty who was sitting in solemn silence, and it was particularly in his clothing that he differed from the rest of them. He was wearing a smartly cut suit, on the waistcoat of which hung a particularly heavy gold chain. Soon I was looking at him too, racking my brains as to how much the gold chain must have cost. . . .

Such in those days was the measure of my hunger.

For a while we stared at one another until he suddenly beckoned to me to come over. When I reached his table he invited me to sit down and asked would I care for a drink.

'No thank you,' I replied. 'Or maybe something to eat?' Not that either, thank you.' 'Well, what are you doing here, hen?' he asked. 'Nothing at all, just looking for a job. . . .' What sort of a job?' 'What I would like most of all,' I told him, 'would be some easy work such as peddling picture-postcards aboard the ships and in the taverns . . . that would suit me fine! And now you ask where I come from? Heavens above, I no longer know the answer to that one myself . . . at all events, from a very long way away . . . terrifically far away. . . .'

'It is significant that you have forgotten the name of your home town,' he said in a cultured tone, speaking slowly and rather pensively. 'Don't you have any sense of belonging somewhere?'

He was a distinguished man, addressing me with the formal *Sie*. He seemed, furthermore, to be interested in my fate, and I was therefore all enthusiasm for him.

'What me, belong somewhere? Why should I? . . . They are the very worst people in the world who come from there. . . .' Then he asked whether I had any relatives here? 'No,' I told him, 'I have no relations anywhere. . . . Nowhere in the world. . . . And had I ever had any anywhere, the only relative I have is God above, absolutely the only one. . . .'

Such in those days was the measure of my piety.

My outburst seemed to have made some sort of an impression on him, for he remained silent and thoughtful for quite a while. Then he said:

'What I would like to suggest is this: let's get away from here and go somewhere else. Then I think I might be able to help you to achieve your goal.'

'My goal? Oh, you mean that business about peddling picture-postcards, but that was just a figure of speech. . . . My goal is something quite different . . . something much higher, much more meaningful. . . .'

'Fine,' he broke in, getting to his feet. 'We can talk about that later, but let's get going now.'

So I went along with him.

A good while later we were sitting in a different tavern, a much better class of place. He persuaded me to have a meal and talked to me in a gentle and fatherly way.

Then for a long while he wrapped himself in silence, only breaking it to say:

'It really was a lucky break for you, meeting me here, for I have great plans for you. . . . You see, I am leaving very soon for Constantinople, and I shall take you with me. . . . Do you get me? . . . It will be a complete eye-opener for you. . . . the most wonderful streets, houses and parks, and the magic of the Bosphorus. . . . It is unique in the world. . . . And every Friday one can witness the spectacle of the Sultan driving to the mosque. . . . It is a superb sight. . . . You will have to travel as my son. I will be your father and you, sorry' (at this point he substituted the familiar *Du* for the formal *Sie*) 'and you will be my son. . . . And from now on you must always use *Du* when you speak to me . . . do you follow?'

THE FATHER

Then he pinched my cheek and said: 'You know, you'd be a nice-looking kid if you were properly dressed.'

I looked at him in astonishment, not having an idea as to what was afoot. The reference to my being nice-looking struck me as very odd, and I was not a little annoyed at his blandly going over to the familiar *Du* without so much as by-your-leave. I knew, of course, that that was the normal form of address as between father and son.

Then he asked another question: 'How old are you?' 'Eighteen,' I answered without a blush.

Such in those days was the measure of my depravity.

He said he thought I looked younger than that. . . . Then he asked to see my passport, adding that he would have to take charge of it anyway.

'But I haven't got a passport, no papers at all!' This seemed to arouse his suspicions, for he relapsed into thought.

Actually I did have my papers on me, but I did not want to show them to him straightforwardly, so that he would not see that had added four years onto my age.

We remained sitting together there for a long while, and again and again he told me about the splendours of Turkey, and how much I would like it there. . . . All I had to do was to keep my wits about me and not forget to call him 'Father'. He added that the ship was leaving in only three days' time. In the meanwhile he was expecting the arrival of his two real sons, who were somewhat younger than I, but he hoped we would get on well together.

He also gave me a twenty-franc note, out of which I was to pay the rent for my garret and then move into his hotel the following day.

Those were indeed exciting days for me, and the thrill of it kept me from sleeping a wink. I spent the whole time painting the most wonderful pictures of Turkey. It even occurred to me that they had harems there, the most marvellous harems, and that I would have a chance to see these too.

Waiting for sailing day was torture. When on the third day we at last went on board, I was introduced to two neglected looking boys, who were supposed to be his real sons . . . but I could not understand them at all, for they chattered away in some odd kind of childish gibberish. They looked a bit dull too. There was an enormous crowd on the ship, with all the din and chatter that always goes with Orientals. Suddenly I saw my father stare straight ahead and turn deathly pale. Then he was trying to push the bystanders aside in an attempt to

reach the gangway. The next moment a strange man grabbed him by the arm and came over towards us.

I stared in astonishment, not at all understanding what was going on.

The stranger was a tall, strongly-built individual with clean-cut manly features and a brushed-up moustache. In a very harsh tone he asked the father: 'How many of them?' 'Three.' 'Where are they?' 'Here,' said the father, indicating us three boys. The stranger scrutinized us closely and then said curtly: 'Come with me.'

So we all five left the ship.

Later on the commissioner of police said to me: 'That was a stroke of luck for you, us being able to put a stop to that one. He was a very notorious trafficker in girls.'

'Indeed,' I said, 'then you might have spared your energies. After all, I'm not a girl...'

At the time I was consumed with bitterness against these officials for having so abruptly shattered my dream.

My two neglected little brothers were detained. My own papers, however, were in order, and as I could also produce nine francs in cash, the balance of my father's present, I was released with many a warning and admonition.

Two days later, when I at last got round to peddling my picture-postcards in the taverns, success did not come my way at all. Not, as might be thought, because I was a bad businessman even in those days, but because I had not ceased to dream of Turkey and the Bosphorus, the Sultan and the harems. And how can a young man be expected to achieve anything in life if he has left his heart and his head in an unknown land?

Such in those days was the measure of my romanticism.

Salamon Dembitzer

THE RECORDING SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA has issued another Brolga record in the series *The Poet Speaks*: six poems by A. D. Hope spoken by the author (BS—05, mg. 33½ r.p.m.). Other recordings in this series are by Dame Mary Gilmore and Judith Wright. The Society is a non-profit making body; communications may be addressed to GPO Box 572, Sydney, NSW.

CAVING IN AUSTRALIA

Brian O'Brien

THERE'S a rhythm you acquire when paying out a safety rope to a climber descending a big drop in a cave. Your left hand pulls the rope from the coil behind you, as your right hand feeds the rope to the climber. Your feet are firmly braced as you lean into this rope, conscious of the comfort of another rope tethering your own waist. A sweep of right arm out and left arm in, and you have given slack for the climber to descend a further rung of the ladder through the blackness. Again and again a sweep as you fit in with the climber's rhythm. There's an art in safety roping—it's not all brawn and brace!

John was the third one I had belayed that day into the Drum Cave at Bungonia. One hundred and forty-five feet of free fall—if you were unlucky. Each descent took about fifteen minutes for the less-experienced, as John was. When you have belayed many people on many caving ventures, you can almost feel the caver's thoughts travelling to you along the rope: the first fearful hesitation as he steps backward over the edge into the darkness; then the resolve as he gets the feel of things and starts to climb down, with an occasional apprehensive shout, 'take in slack',—when you curse him for breaking his rhythm. With the beginners you can predict almost to the foot when they will start exchanging banter with those waiting below. The last is an interesting moment—the transition from a solitary climber to a social animal as his protective mask is replaced.

Sweep out, and in. Sweep out, and in. John is almost halfway down now, and seems all right. Your mind is dancing everywhere as your arms sweep to and fro. And then suddenly a frantic yell and a simultaneous tremendous jerk as the rope whips tight under your arms and your waist is snapped at by your own rope. But you don't go over and you don't let go; you have saved his life. Then conscious thought commences and you gently lower the half-hysterical John into the arms below.

Caving can be like that. You are carrying out a familiar routine half unconsciously, and the darkness, quenched only by your light, is your adopted environment. Then suddenly comes a crisis—the moment of truth; you react—and afterwards you talk about it.

Cave exploring is a grand sport. Where else can you combine mountaineering (the Poles call caving 'underground alpinism'),

rock climbing, glissading and original exploration with the discovery of beauty, and all this in the dark? Add a swinging rope descent, a scramble amongst and under huge unstable boulders, a swim in a near-frozen underground river, and you begin to have the elements of caving. Add further a fellow who is a kindred spirit, freedom from petty officialdom, and put all this in a spur of the Snowy Mountains, on a plateau where young streams bounce down among the snow gums to plunge into a wondrous cave and you arrive at Yarrangobilly, my treasured caving area.

When you lie on your back at night beside a campfire at Yarrangobilly, the snow gums tower up all round you, supporting the canopy of blackness lit by countless stars. After a day of caving, you come out to this natural cathedral, and trivialities are far away.

The attractions in caving do not come solely from caving *per se*. Infinite variety results also from the human element, since men of many types are cave explorers.

One is a scientist, eminent in an Australian university. He is content to enter a cave, choose a region where the roof is a few feet above the floor, and then lie on his back and gaze for hours enraptured with the geological wonders.

Another is a medical student, and my close companion in many caves. In all the coldness of Kosciusko and Yarrangobilly, swathed in jumpers, multiple trousers, blizzard jacket and the rest, he has always quite seriously refused to wear his last jumper, because, otherwise, he 'wouldn't have anything to put on if it got any colder'.

With companions such as these, night-long discussions of campfire philosophies are vastly different from the hurried say-your-piece and make-your-point coffee-cup discussions beloved of students. The radiant, ever-changing depths of a campfire are far more conducive to contemplation than the tepid murk of coffee.

After this contemplation, or before it, comes the physical exhilaration which one can find in caving, for example in 'boulder hopping'. One selects a cave where many rock falls have occurred, so that for several hundred feet the 'floor' consists of great slabs of rock piled up in complete chaos. Some boulders are thirty feet along each edge, and two may be separated by a gap of only a few feet, but this gap is thirty feet deep. All around and above are smaller rocks, some securely placed, but most of them sway when pushed. In 'boulder hopping' you traverse this mess as fast as you can, taking only

Meeting foot-holds because the rocks may move under you. Co-ordination of eye, balance, muscle and judgment is supreme in boulder hopping by the light of a flickering lamp.

Science has intruded into caving too, and then it is dignified with the name speleology. However, it has not yet got the upper hand, being kept in its place by the fact that it is largely dependent for observations on the common caver. In return it tries to answer his questions—for instance, about the origin and development of caves; it raises new ones—as science always does; and it also guides him to a point where he can make valuable discoveries—telling him where a cave may be found, or how to look for remains of primitive man in caves.

Caving as an organized activity in Australia goes back only a few years to the formation of the Tasmanian Caverneering Club in 1946, and the Sydney University Speleological Society in 1948. Yet at Christmas 1956 representatives of fourteen Australian caving groups from every state met in Adelaide and formed the Australian Speleological Federation. The Northern Territory and New Guinea, however, remain comparatively undeveloped regions.

Caving is also very popular overseas. Great Britain, France and Italy all have many caving groups, while the National Speleological Society of the USA has a membership extending into several thousands. There has been lately an extensive exchange of information and journals even reaching behind the Iron Curtain. This has made caving more interesting, probably because one's potential audience is so much greater. Under this stimulus, besides normal caving activities, some of us have carried out investigations of the effects of 'foul air' in caves, the use of walkie-talkies underground, and other matters which are of immediate interest to cavers everywhere.

Foul air is an intriguing study. Carbon dioxide sometimes occurs in high concentrations in caves, much higher than its 0.03 per cent in normal air. In high concentrations of about one hundred-fold increase over normal flames are smoky, matches won't burn, and one's breathing rate goes up. All this has been known for some years, but when cavers met foul air (not very frequently) they generally commented on the fact and sensibly retreated.

However, a few years ago a medical student at Sydney University spurred us on to examine the effects and possible concentrations of foul air. In the following months we had many interesting and a few exciting moments as we chased the foul air with our little sample bottles.

On one occasion my companion and I went down the Drum Cave at Bungonia determined to get record-high concentrations. We took samples as our breathing rate increased two-fold, then three-fold. Our acetylene lamps began to give fitful, smoky flames and finally went out altogether at the least movement. We both had electric headlamps and switched these on; then we tried to relight both lamps, which continued to spew acetylene into the already unsavoury air. Finally, by striking matches in bundles of three, we lit the lamps, laid them gently on the cave-floor, and went on.

We came to a small cliff which dropped about nine feet to a rock platform and then ended in an unclimbable drop. We had climbed the cliff easily on previous occasions when we were fit and the foul air concentration was low, but we had sufficient remaining reason to know that now it would be difficult.

My companion drew the shorter match, climbed down, took a sample, and prepared to climb back. By this time our minds were wandering to such an extent that each forgot even the other's name—physiologists tell me this is a combined effect of carbon dioxide poisoning and oxygen deficiency.

So there we were: Fred at the bottom of the cliff trying in a half-hearted way to scramble up, while I lay on my back at the top daydreaming and not much caring whether he got up or not. We eventually combined in a vague sort of way, and returned to climb the weary one hundred and forty-five feet up and out of the cave. That final sample of foul air was measured to have five per cent carbon dioxide, the highest we have yet obtained. I don't look forward to getting any higher. And yet, perhaps, I do.

All the states of Australia have limestone caves, although the strength of the caving groups in NSW has resulted in systems such as Jenolan, Wombeyan, Abercrombie and Yarrangobilly in NSW receiving disproportionate attention. The potentially big caves up in the Kimberleys, at Chillagoe in Queensland and in the centre of Australia will undoubtedly be explored when Australian speleology finds patrons willing to finance the costly expeditions to such places.

Under the Nullarbor Plain are hundreds of caves, with entrances of varied shapes and sizes guaranteed to satisfy the most fussy caver. Blow-hole entrances tailored to fit the slim speleologist contrast with one which is about one thousand feet in diameter. The caverns underneath are as varied, and the mighty cavern of the Abrakurrie cave is twelve hundred feet long, about one hundred and sixty feet wide and one hundred and fifty feet high.

CAVING IN AUSTRALIA

Concealed under the Nullarbor is more than just a multitude of caves. In January 1957 Dr Gallus, a Victorian anthropologist with an Australian Speleological Federation expedition, found boriginal artefacts inside the dark zone of one of the caves. These have been dated as eight thousand to ten thousand years old. Those finds led to a drastic revision of the commonly-held opinion that the aborigines have always been too terrified by the dark to enter caves. It now seems that they may have been just as adventurous, or anxious for shelter, as Aurignacian men in France or the Bushmen in Africa. As yet we know little about the art of these Australian aborigines of long ago; we certainly have not yet discovered anything approaching the famous drawings at Lascaux. The discovery of drawings on the walls in the 'true-cave' darkness is largely a matter of chance. However, near the entrances of several Nullarbor caves there are examples of the familiar etched hand, a technique common to prehistoric artists in many lands.

Australian caves are generally only of the order of a few hundred feet deep, so that all our bigger descents can be made using a combination of long ropes and home-made flexible fire ladders. Maybe there are some very deep holes awaiting our discovery in the wilder portions of Australia. Fairly recently, Tasmanian speleologists made a record descent of five hundred and fifty feet in a succession of pitches, some under waterfalls.

When people visit commercial caves as tourists, they are generally impressed first by the utter darkness, and then by the strange formations which the artificial illumination reveals. The weird beauty of form and colouring of the crystalline formations is quite beyond verbal description, though their names have a certain evocative value: moon-milk, cave-pearls, eel-tites, gours, palettes and so on.

To describe the darkness of caves is simpler. You have the twilight zone, where daylight may penetrate; and you have the true-cave zone, the region of everlasting darkness. Consider a complete absence, indeed a negation of light; surround it completely with chill rocks; plunge it underground where no sound penetrates, and you have a cave. Darkness, cold, silence, deeply enclosed. Isolate a normal mind in such a vast natural tomb and things begin to happen to it; for the conditions approach those which some psychologists have recently been creating experimentally in order to study the effect of suspending a human being outside the context of ordinary sense stimuli.

The effects of a cave environment upon a modern explorer are varied. While he is with companions with light and laughter

and pleasant noise, he is a civilized man. But let him be cold and weary and last in a party leaving a wild cave, and his imagination is wont to people the blackness with Things. Over there, lurking behind that huge rock, surely there was a flicker of movement as my lamp turned away. . . . The primeval Bogy Man waits his opportunity to make his presence felt.

A few years ago I was lost and alone for three days in a big unexplored cave at Yarrangobilly. During that time I could only shiver in a temperature four degrees above freezing, and try to find my way out through the blackness by crawling along throwing pebbles to gauge what lay ahead. As I became progressively more tired and my mind slowed its working, the Bogy Man himself and his companions whose name is Legion emerged just beyond the range of my hearing and my touch.

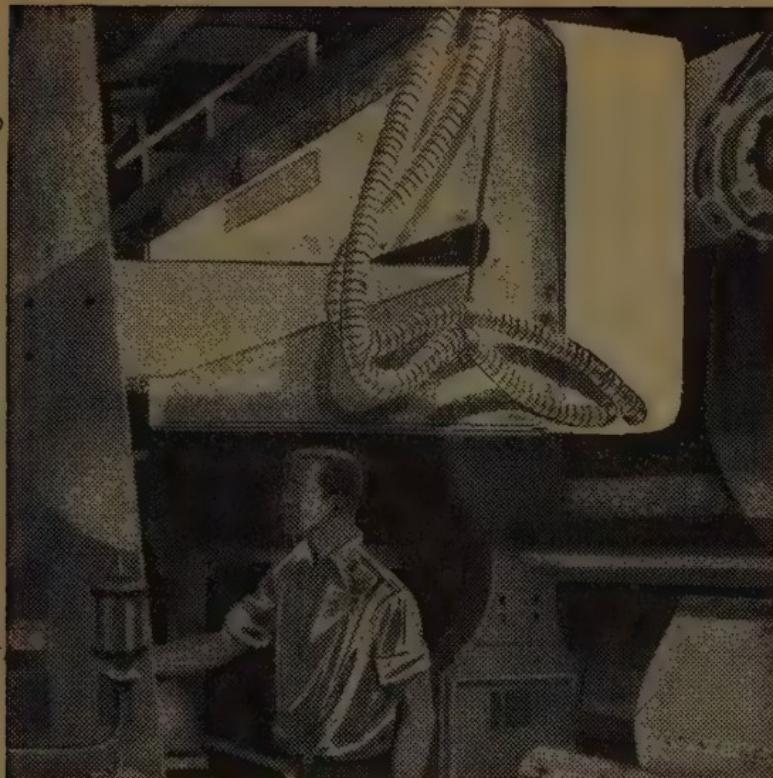
The Bogy Man was not there all the time—I could hold him off by singing or chanting favourite verses. But when I stopped, leaving the absolute deathly stillness of the cave, he would gain courage as I lost it. In all the stillness, he was just behind me, but he made no sound, all I could hear was the whisper of my breath and the 'whoosh-whoosh' of my heart beat (that 'pit-a-pat' business is all wrong).

Why does the Bogy Man become important when one is completely alone and in the dark, and when one's imagination has a rare opportunity? The Freudians talk of the womb, but they have not explained to me why the dark womb of the earth is inhabited by Something terrible. Nor do they explain whether It is terrible in itself, or only in my ignorance of It. For myself, I just don't know. But I do know that through the tensions and joys of caving, it is possible to know one's self intimately, and to make close acquaintance with one's *other* self. Therein, perhaps, lies one reason for our caving.

In my memories of the time I was lost, I seemed to look down from a height and see myself lying on a huge boulder in the midst of a jumbled mass of rock. All is primeval chaos and darkness yet I can see. Perhaps it is that I see, as the saying goes, in my mind's eye. I am utterly alone, and yet I have the sensation that I am not alone. I know that in my private thoughts I am not alone because of Something which is in my mind, and through that Something I am linked with other men, and these links hold off the terror which would engulf me. And in my mind there is light

*'et lux in tenebris lucet,
et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt.'*

Brian O'Brien



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ABORIGINES MAKE MUSIC

Jeremy Beckett

THERE was a party on the aboriginal settlement, that night. Old Grannie Kennedy had been mourning a twelve month for her dead son and, according to the traditional custom, the end of the period must be marked by a party. In the old days this would have meant a corroboree, but here in Wilcannia, on the banks of the Darling, where white and black had been living alongside one another for three generations and more, such things as corroborees belonged to the past. On a flattened patch of earth, in front of the old lady's verandah, couples shuffled round to the waltzes and barn dances played on accordion and guitar. Standing on one side were the girls dressed in their best cotton frocks and on the other the men in their riding breeches, high-heeled boots and ten-gallon hat of the outback station worker. But there is always plenty of music around an aboriginal settlement. During the day the women do their housework with the wireless blaring, and at night someone will sit on his verandah, strumming a guitar, until a little crowd has gathered to listen and take their turn at the instrument.

Almost all the songs the aborigines sing nowadays are of white origin, picked up from the radio or gramophone, or, perhaps, from some white acquaintance. Songs like *Way Down Upon the Swannee River* or *Poor Dog Tray* must have been picked up a couple of generations back, at least. Someone can sing the *Old Bullock Dray*, the tale of the bullocky who, unable to get a white woman to be his wife and share his bushman's life 'up the country', marries a 'black gin' instead.

*Now I am married and with piccaninnies three,
There's no one lives so happy as my little wife and me.
The Missus she goes hunting just to pass the time away,
While I take the skins to market on my old bullock dray.*

The numerous half-castes around one bear out the truth of the story. But among black, white and brindled, hillbilly songs are the real favourites in the Australian outback. This brand of music, characterized by a great deal of yodelling and a simple, three-chord guitar accompaniment, hails from the United States. The records of singers like the late Jimmy Rogers, the

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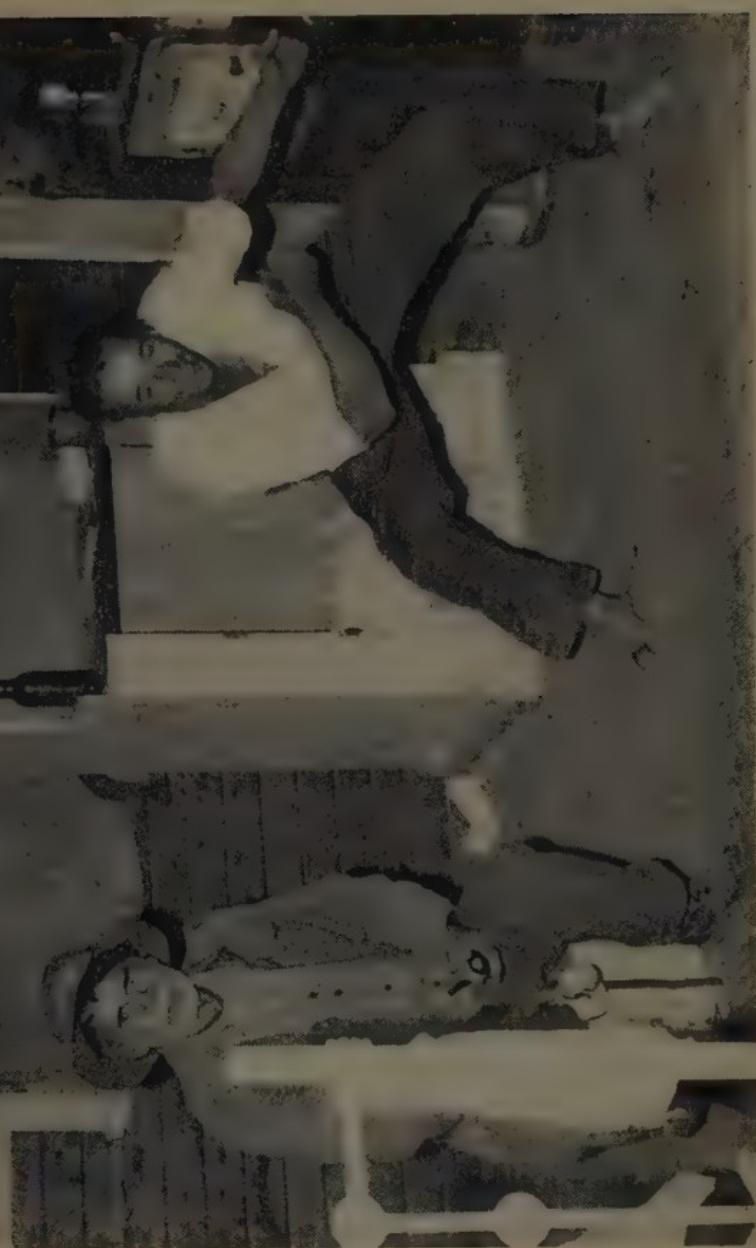
Tom Clark and Fred Biggs remember one of the old songs

ABORIGINES MAKE MUSIC

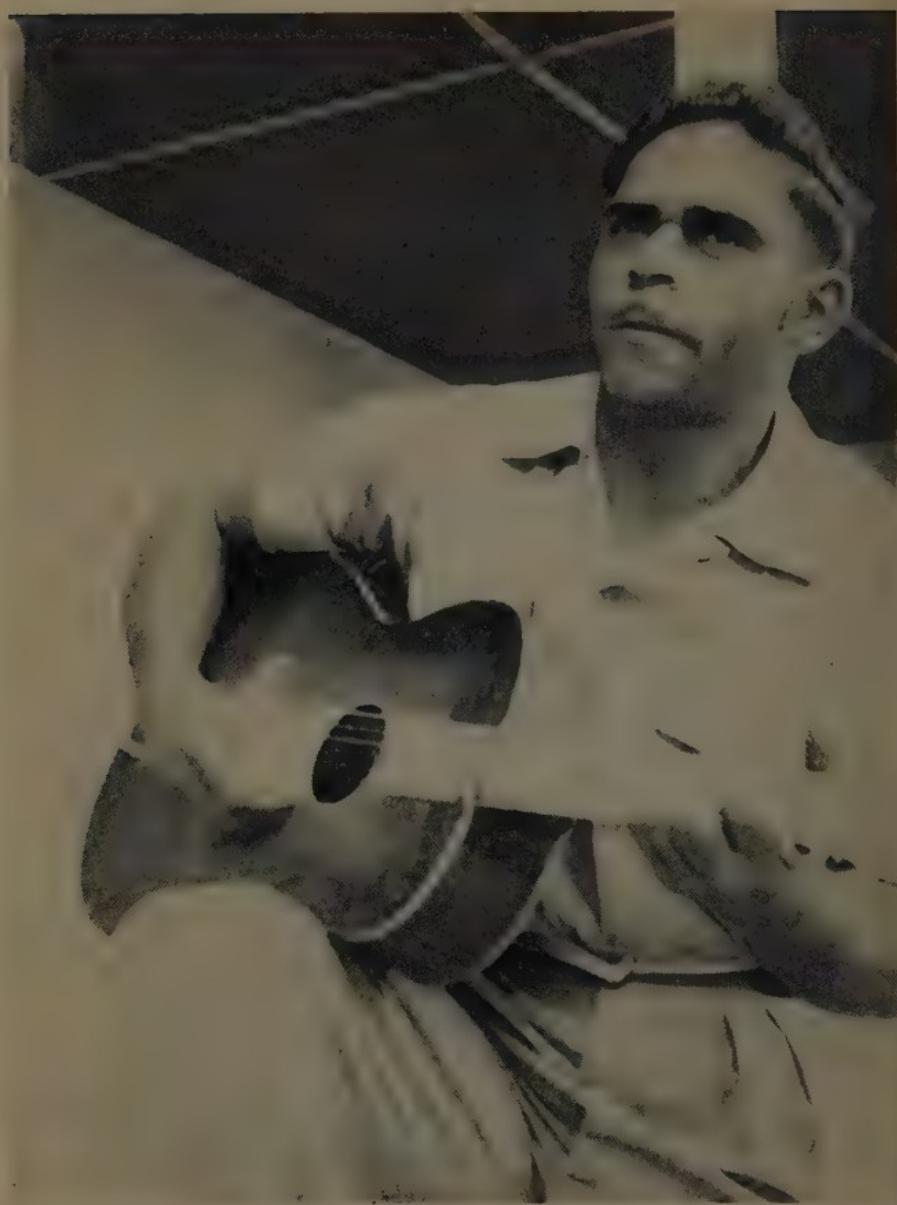


'Corroboree'

ABORIGINES MAKE MUSIC



Tom Clark demonstrates the 'blackfellers' charleston'



Bill Reilly sings a hillbilly song

yodelling cowboy', popularized it in the twenties; but soon Australian artists took it over and gave it a distinctive outback flavour. Now the stars are names like the 'Sheik of Scrubby Creek' and the popular numbers have titles like *Queensland State So Fair* or the *Flying Doctor*.

Of course, aborigines sang and danced long before the white man made his appearance, and even when they heard his music they did not at once abandon their own. They sang their songs at corroborees, and the oldest generation will tell you how they used to paint up and dance before a great fire, while the women sang and beat time. You can still get a few to show you what the dance steps were like: they facetiously call it the 'blackfellers' Charleston', which is as close a description as one could want. Men like Fred Biggs, who spent most of his life round Trida, and his son-in-law, Tom Clark, who was brought up along the banks of the Darling, can still sing the old songs, clapping out the rhythm on a couple of boomerangs and a pillow. But the younger generation don't like to hear these songs. They giggle and say it makes them feel 'shamed'. 'We're like white folks, now,' they say.

They would make up a song about anything—rainmaking, catching porcupine, a lost child. When the white man appeared they made up songs about him. When the white station manager sent his aboriginal workers off to a distant paddock, while he returned to fornicate with their women, there was a song about it. There was a song about the government man who, coming to inspect rabbit infested stations, was taken into the parlour and filled with whiskey. Quite often one hears English words mixed up among the native, as in this south-western Queensland song, which describes an aborigine and a white man meeting together and having a drink.

*Wandiwadiwa (where are you going) boy,
Good mornin' boy,
Come an' have a nobbler.
Pale brandy, dark brandy,
I wandee juramu (I want rum).*

The hillbilly radio shows provide a spate of songs about broken hearts, legendary horses, and the joys of bush life, which the aborigines learn to sing for themselves and imitate more or less successfully in their own compositions. One of these celebrates Tommy the hawker who, we are told, 'brought balloons to the great outback'. But there are other matters which concern the aborigine and about which the radio says nothing.

*Here's a song my boys 'll make you jump for joy,
And it's sung by Youngie Doug¹
The people all say it'll go a long way:
They call it Cut a Rug.*

*Up at Bree² they call it a spree,
In Bourke its jitterbug.
But further down, in Wilcannia town,
They call it Cut a Rug.*

What is this spree, this jitterbug, this 'cutting a rug'? The last two are jazz words coined by American negroes, but here they have been given a special meaning—to let off steam, to cut a dash, to get riproaring drunk.

*The boys and me was having spree,
In the mallee last Saturday night.
We was doing fine, drinking beer and wine,
Everything was going alright.*

*We sang a song as we joked along,
Until some bloke mentioned fight!
And the people all said that we went off our head,
Because we rung the mallee that night.*

*Old Hunter Bert, he was awfully hurt,
The old boy he was half dead;
His hands they shook and he looked so crook,
Laying back there in his bed.*

*I said 'Be a sport, won't you have a snort?'
And I filled up his little brown mug.
The first drink he had, his eyes got red,
He flew out and cut a rug.*

*Now there's young Jimalow, the boy we all know,
They say he's just doing fine.
He was down in town, he was slipping around,
With a chaff bag full of wine.*

*He borrowed a sub and headed straight for the pub,
That boy he ain't no mug.
And very soon he had all us coon,
In the mallee cutting a rug.*

¹ The author, Dougie Young, has inverted his name here.

² Bree, i.e. Brewarrina, another aboriginal settlement.

ABORIGINES MAKE MUSIC

*When you're sick and sore and you crave for more,
And your money's all run out.
Don't sit around, take a stroll down town,
And do a little bit of foxing about.*

*It ain't no dice until you got the price,
And then you give your mate a tug.
You'll be smiling again as you walk down the lane,
Because you're going to cut a rug.*

Of course, it must not be supposed that every aborigine is a dipsomaniac; some, in fact, do not drink at all. But most like to make a splash after a long spell of work in the bush, just as the backblocks shearer used to put his cheque across the bar and drink it out. But there is one important difference. The law forbids the sale of liquor to all save a few 'well behaved' aborigines who have earned themselves a Certificate of Exemption or, as their unprivileged mates call it, a 'dog licence'. Of course, prohibition never did work and when the aborigine cannot get his wine and beer smuggled out from the back of the hotel he may take to methylated spirits. Indeed, there are a few hardened cases who are reputed to prefer the 'white lady'. A cynical little ditty proclaims that

*Beer is all froth and bubble,
Whiskey will make you moan,
Plonk is another name for trouble,
But the metho is out on its own.*

The aborigine is determined that he will drink and it is the duty of the police to see that he does not and to arrest him when he gets drunk. The result is an utterly futile running fight between the two, in which neither gains any ground. In Condobolin an aborigine, in flight from the police, drained his bottle of port as he ran; when he had emptied it he stopped and, throwing the bottle aside, said, 'Alright, now you can take me!'

And often enough an aborigine is drunk again within half an hour of leaving gaol. The *Wilcannia Song* gives the aborigines' side of the picture.

*See the blackfeller drinking beneath the tall gum tree.
When he sees the policeman come you'll see him split the breeze.
Many's the time I've tried it but running does not pay.
'Cause when they get you in those cells; ten pounds or twenty days.*

*Now twenty days' hard labour, Oh brother that's just fine!
No sweets, no sugar in your tea, no smokes to ease your mind.
You're camping on an old floor mat, the concrete for your bed.
You feel your belly pinching and you wish that you were dead.*

*But when I get my pay next week, I won't fool around.
I'm going to round up all the boys when I get into town.
I'll turn on the liquor for the young ones and the old,
And if we wind up in the cells, Lord have mercy on our souls.*

A spell in gaol—with perhaps a bit of rough handling—is part of the price the aborigine pays for his drinking spree, and he has come to accept the matter philosophically. Self-pity is not an aboriginal vice. A group of aborigines are sitting along the bridge that links their settlement with Wilcannia town, across the river. Someone sings out to Paddy Ryan, just out after ten days in gaol and already half drunk:

'Where you been, Paddy?'

'I been down in Maree for ten days.'

'What the weather been like down there, Paddy?'

'Oh, very cool!'

But there is a less happy side to all this, for drunkenness is very likely to wreck family life. Women must get their house-keeping money from their husbands as soon as the latter come in with their cheques, and they must get it to the store before the bender starts and they are asked to give it back. Many are enraged at the way their menfolk spend on drink money that should be devoted to the family. Two girls have composed a song about their parents which begins,

*Now Mum and Dad, it makes me sad,
To hear them row night 'n day:
Dad never gives Mum anything,
When he gets his pay.
He'll stay down town all day long
And half the night as well.
When he comes home, tries to get in bed,
She pushes him out on his head.*

*But when we're in bed, all asleep,
We'll hear someone call out 'Dear!'
'Don't "Dear" me,' says the wife in fear,
'You go your own way, now.
I gave you a chance but you threw it away,
So I'm finished with you now.'*

Fortunately, in this case, Dad has a sweet tongue and generally manages to talk Mum round after a day or two. The song ends as follows:

*So now he's in bed, he's right again,
That's Stan, the sly old fox.*

Not every squabble ends so happily, however. A man well primed with wine is not likely to be reasonable in argument, and on such occasions all the suspicions and resentment that he normally suppresses come to the surface. Most women are well able to hold their own when it comes to invective and one or two have vented their feeling by burning their husband's clothes. But when a man turns to violence, the only solution is to wait for a lull in hostilities and send for the police. By the time tempers have cooled and the effects of the wine have worn off, the two may be ready to resume normal relations. The following song, a parody of the popular number *Dear John*, describes with a wry sort of humour the 'morning after' such an episode.

(recited)

*I was trapping out at Mooney when the gunyan³ came to me.
When he handed me a summons, I was frightened as I could be.
'Your dear wife you have flattened, she was bleeding from the head.'
Then I learned from Doctor Player, my dear little wife was dead.*

(sung)

*'Dear wife, well I hate to fight.
Dear wife, well I knocked you out last night.
All my wine and money's gone,
And you sent round for the John,
And tonight I've been arrested, dear wife.'*

The last chorus is, of course, written in the form of a letter to the ill-used wife. Aboriginal letters all seem to include a liberal use of *well*, which is presumably designed to effect a conversational style.

People who have learned to respect and even admire the traditional culture of the Australian aborigine shake their heads when they see how low contact with whites has brought them. And, indeed, the first sight of a humpy camp or a government settlement is a depressing one. Is this all that the white man, so convinced of his cultural superiority, has been able to give the black? The small outback township, which few aborigines

* *Gunyan*, an aboriginal word meaning policeman.

have ever left, has little enough in the way of amenities, but even so its citizens try to exclude their dark neighbours from its churches, swimming baths, schools and hotels. In such circumstances, the aborigines are left to create what life they can among themselves.

Drinking and singing are something to which the dark folk have taken with gusto. They have made these things integral parts of their own way of life. Drinking is not just a matter of taking alcoholic refreshment (nor is it among white folk, for that matter). There is all the excitement of getting the liquor, running the police blockade, risking gaol and sneaking out into the bush to consume it with a great deal of noise and flourish. Memorable sprees are celebrated in song and story and the whole business described in an elaborate set of cant terms and catch phrases, many of which we have encountered in this article. A drinking spree is one of the few means available to the aborigine of breaking the drab monotony of his everyday life. The authorities are devoting a great deal of energy to trying to stop him. But it is surely obvious that a vicious circle has been created; the only way to break it is either to get him drinking in the hotel, alongside and in the same manner as his white neighbours or to find some substitute and less delinquent means of getting excitement. Whether this will be their own brand of 'Hot Gospel' as in the eastern part of NSW, or sports one cannot tell. But this much is certain, the aborigine will continue to drink until he sees reason to stop. As the closing verses of *Cut a Rug* proclaim:

*The people in town just run us down,
They say we live on wine and beer.
But if they'd stop and think, if we didn't drink,
There'd be no fun around here.*

*Just the other day I heard a woman say,
We're nothing but a bunch of mugs.
Although we fight and drink and end up in the clink,
We're going to cut a rug.*



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THE MARKED FISH

W. Hart-Smith

'Someone,' he said, 'has double-crossed me.'
Why, not knowing who had done it,
should he pick on me, tap my chest,
jab my guilty heart?

'Mark the first fish caught. Pierce his tail
and tie a piece of flax there.' We did so.
And after caught a boatful.
'Put him in the fire. Cook him whole.'

'This is the chief's own fish.'
We carried out his wish.
But the next day, light of heart, scorning tapu,
I broke and ate of its hot, whitened flesh.

'Someone has double-crossed me!' tapping my chest.
Turned, pointed to the headland saying 'Look,
it is no good now! Do you see it?'
Yet I could see nothing.

'We do not fish today. It is no good.
Do you see?' And though we took the boat
and fished all day we caught nothing
except two filthy hag-fish that fouled the boat

with slime. Neither did we eat, as he had said,
approaching the place, lining up the marks,
the two headlands touching, a third
poking a brown finger beyond the reef.

I think perhaps he saw something
not connected with any tapu fish—
but something that kept him ashore.
A clarity. Or swing of the wind's rake maybe

that touched a sounder wisdom. Who knows.
But why did he tap my chest, accusingly,
yet not accusing me? You tell me that!
Away from your brown eyes

a meaning comes. It was his charity.
He saw it—some inexpressible change
in look of eye, or mouth. Your headland, maybe? ‘Someone
has double-crossed me’—tapping your heart

where a guilty person hid. Only one
guilty person, among your many persons. Not you,
but one of you. That was the one
he was talking to. He was a chief, truly!

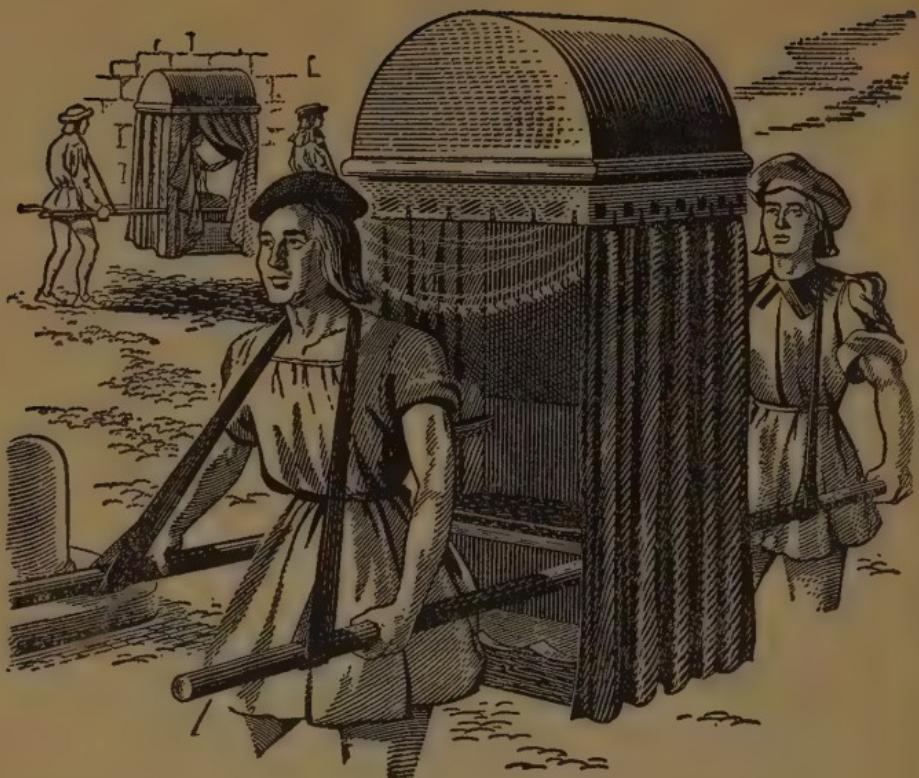
THE MAN FROM STRATHBOGIE

Mary Finnin

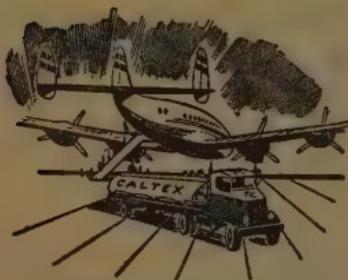
Kelly on a mountain
Beating on a drum
Thundering down Strathbogie
Bringing brumbies home.

Kelly is the clouded night,
The white face in the rain
Seeking a late candle
Set to window pane.
The stranger in the shadow
Of the last camp fire,
Silent as a snow gum,
Burdened with desire.

Kelly is the wild man
In the heart of all,
Running short on conscience,
Holding law in thrall;
The apocalyptic horseman
'Twixt moonlight and the day
Who rides through gold to murder,
To quicklime and to clay.



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FROM A POET'S NOTEBOOK

James McAuley

POETRY today is living in an uneasy aftermath, suffering a hangover from the Romantic-Symbolist intoxication which still lingers because no one knows quite what to do next. Very little good poetry is appearing in England or the United States or France or Germany. As with modern painting, everyone expresses a compulsive admiration for productions which practically no one really likes. Many accept a determinist view that the times are unfavourable and must defeat poetry. But if the times are unfavourable that should be merely a challenge to overcome their influence. In the following notes I have tried to take up a position on some of the main questions which have been at issue over the past century.

I

What the Romantic and Symbolist mystagogues were doing was to take certain things that can be truly said of poetry, but only in a transferred and analogical sense, and assert them as literally as they dared, thus giving poetic genius preternatural or even supernatural pretensions which it cannot sustain.

Poetry does indeed bear a certain resemblance to creation *ex nihilo*. In Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* the merchant says:

'In poetry there is nothing outward to be found, it does not produce anything with materials and hands; the eye and the ear perceive nothing of it: for the mere hearing of the words is not the real working of this secret art. It is all inward, and as other artists fill the external senses with pleasant sensations, so does the poet fill the internal sanctuary of the heart with new, wonderful, and pleasing thoughts. He knows how to stir at will those secret powers in us, and through words we come to perceive an unknown glorious world.'

The passage goes on to describe the 'magical' character of poetic language: 'As from deep caverns, former and future times, innumerable people, wondrous objects and the strangest happenings rise up within us and ravish us from the familiar present. One hears strange words, and yet knows what they mean. The utterances of a poet exercise a magical power; common words come forth in enchanting tones, and intoxicate the spellbound audience.'

Undoubtedly too, within natural limits, poetry can be revelation and prophecy. The poet reveals to us new aspects of things, hidden likenesses, unsuspected moral relationships, or modalities of feeling; and it is sometimes given to him to have such a deep intuition of the spiritual physiognomy of his time as to read its destiny.

The idea of inspiration is also indispensable in the description of the poetic process. It is not a question of a mantic state or state of possession, in which the personality is set aside by an alien spirit; the poem is composed with the ordinary powers of consciousness, yet there is a supernormal heightening and enabling of these powers. It is a kind of 'sober drunkenness', to use the technical term used by Philo and the Church Fathers for mystical contemplation:

*laeti bibamus sobriam
ebrietatem spiritus*

One is reminded of Hölderlin's image of tranquil swans dipping their beaks in 'sober hallowed water'.

Poetry certainly has a 'magical' character, though we make altogether too much of this nowadays. English poetry is particularly rich in a sort of natural magic: images and music stir us to an unaccountable and mysterious delight which seems an effect too great for the few bare words on the page unless we ascribe to them the potency of a spell. The words have a penumbra of suggestion and convey an uncanny thrill.

Yet this is only one element in poetry, and it is a kind of decadence to make an exclusive cult of it.

Moreover such a cult is self-defeating. One does not surpass the magical potency of Shakespeare, Milton or Keats by sacrificing all those other elements of composition which they thought important, such as intelligible subject-matter and logical coherence. When this elusive magical element is pursued as if it, and it alone, constitutes the essence of poetry, composition tends to degenerate into a series of flimsy and trivial enigmas, unclued scrawls, coagulates and colloids of opaque imagery, mere Rohrschach blotches encountering the reader's sensibility in a haphazardly suggestive way.

There is also a real analogy between poetic contemplation and mystical contemplation; but the two ways are quite distinct and incommensurable, being on different planes. Nor should the fact that poetry is a lower 'reflection' of mysticism, and therefore ideally a stage of ascent directing the mind towards the higher state, blind one to the fact that poets are seldom mystics, and poetry normally approaches mystical themes rather distantly

and indirectly, if at all. It is rare to find in one man poetic greatness and high mystical attainment. St John of the Cross combined the two vocations in an eminent degree—yet after all he wrote little poetry. More usually, it seems, the poet's attachment to the level of sense and feeling and imagination makes it difficult for him to pass to a level of detachment where the mind is stripped of sensations, emotions and images in order to 'experience divine things'. Even religious poetry is concerned only exceptionally with mysticism. 'Psalmody arises from the wisdom that is multiform, while prayer is the prelude to a gnosis that is immaterial and uniform' says the *Philokalia*.

II

'He has made all things in number, weight and measure' (Wis. xi, 21). The number, weight and measure of verse bear a kind of sacred character by reason of their analogy with the divine ordering. Joseph de Maistre insists on the kinship of number and intelligence in the eighth colloquy of his *Les Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*: 'Take away number and you take away the arts and sciences and therefore also intelligence. Restore it: and with it reappear its two heavenly daughters, harmony and beauty: a cry becomes song, noise becomes rhythm, leaping is now a dance, force is dynamic, and traces are figures.' He points out that in many languages the same words refer to number and thought (ratio, reckon, calculate, count, etc.) and concludes: 'number is the mirror of the intellect.' Then he adds: 'All created things prove by their syntax the existence of a divine author who speaks to us by these signs; in effect all these beings are letters which unite to form a discourse which proves the existence of the God Who pronounces it. . . .'

For the ancients the formal order of music and poetry was bound up with the cosmic order and the order of society through occult correspondence. The Chinese *Book of Rites* says: 'The kings of olden times instituted rites and music in order to regulate human emotions.' And again: 'Occasionally when the government is decaying there will arise tones not conforming with these high musical principles. . . . These incite people to depravity, confuse proper relations between men and women, ruler and subject, and sap the foundations of the state.' Plato similarly: 'The modes of music are never disturbed without unsettling the most fundamental political and social conventions.'

Has this intuition no meaning for us?

Erich Meissner in his book *Confusion of Faces* expressed a somewhat similar feeling for the import of traditional forms in

his comment on modern civilization: 'In actual fact, Art deteriorated. It became experimental.' Formidable words, whose significance we have not yet fully faced.

As far as experiment in verse forms goes, we seem to be nearing the end of a period of restless innovation. None of the new schemes proposed during the past century to replace traditional metre and rhyme has proved successful as a standard form for general and repeated use. Who could bear a whole literature based on sprung rhythm, or free verse, or loosened semi-regular verse, or assonance and part-rhyme? One or two individual successes in such forms practically exhaust their usefulness. I think reason can be shown why this is so.

The norm of English verse is a line built up of disyllabic feet (iambic or trochaic), of a length which is either invariable, or varied in accordance with a regular stanzaic form. A limited number of reversals and substitutions of metrical feet are permitted. Rhyme is normal except for certain kinds of composition, and is generally true rhyme, though more approximate rhymes are tolerable as a subordinate element, so long as not obtrusive or systematic.

Admittedly there is an element of arbitrariness in the choice of poetic formalities. The poet is in one sense at liberty to try anything: innovation is not in itself a legitimate ground of complaint. But in another sense the poet is not at liberty, since he is secretly bound by the character of the language.

The iambic-trochaic regular line is the English norm because it fits the language and organizes best its potentialities. Its secret lies in *tension*. A firm framework of expectation is established in the reader's mind and the verse in its actual spoken sound continually plays against this framework. There is a fixed pattern overlaid by a very flexible and changeable movement. Speech stress and metrical stress coincide only in part. The shifting pauses continually divide the line in different ratios, and the varying sense-phrases sometimes follow closely the line-lengths and sometimes run counter to them.

Subtlety, complexity and balance are all on the side of the traditional verse. It provides the best combination of freedom and order. Other proposed forms all sacrifice some part of the maximum interplay between metrical expectation and actual sound which the traditional verse provides. Even such a relatively slight additional liberty as irregularity in varying the line-lengths, which became more common in the nineteenth century, pays for the facilities it enjoys by some loss of contrast between sense-phrasing and line-length, because the phrasing must

more nearly coincide with the verse-line to justify the irregularity. If trisyllabic verse is adopted, the speech stress must coincide pretty closely with the metrical stress or the line will fall into confusion. If a purely accentual verse is attempted, the freedom gained with regard to the number and placing of unaccented syllables is paid for by the loss of the 'counterpoint' between iambic-trochaic pattern and actual sound. If a purely syllabic verse is tried, the freedom gained with regard to the number and placing of stresses is paid for by loss of the interplay between speech stress and metrical stress. If 'loosened verse' is relied on, the tensions referred to above are all weakened; the verse either tends towards slackness or has to be given rhythmic vigour by heavy emphases or other devices. Free verse, since it surrenders all the advantages of the traditional form, has not proved very useful in English.

III

Voltaire's definition of *faux esprit* in literature makes uncomfortable reading for us: 'affectation of saying in enigmas what others have already said naturally; of bringing together ideas that appear incompatible: of dividing what should be united; of seizing upon unreal resemblances; of mixing, in defiance of decorum, the playful and the serious, the petty and the great'.

Readers of modern poetry have been trained to value *intensity* of expression: concentration, ellipsis, shock, verbal collision, irony. Such intensity is very well, but if it becomes an invariable method it is unduly restrictive and also encourages a factitious style of writing. There are subtleties and intensities which can only be obtained if the poet can carry his reader through a more open and discursive development.

A good deal of modern poetry is also a poetry of unresolved tensions, ambivalence, instability of thought and feeling. Styles are formed to express the mood of an intelligentsia preyed upon by anxiety and doubt. Disquietude becomes a cult; certainty is regarded as vulgar plainness. At the moment a prevalent fashion in England is towards a withdrawal into a deliberately minor poetry full of what are meant to be civilized delicacies and restraints but are more often small neurotic complications aping a classicism which is out of reach. More generally the modern period has tended towards a cult of the violent, the excessive, the paroxysmal. Yet it is a *weak* violence of nervous irritability, galvanic *witchings, suppressed or emerging hysteria.

The following remarks in Valéry's *Léonard et les philosophes* are in point: 'Novelty, intensity, strangeness, in a word, all the values of shock, have supplanted Beauty. A raw excitation is the sovereign mistress of recent spirits; the function of works now is to tear us away from the contemplative state . . . they are more and more penetrated by the most unstable and immediate modes of psychic and sensitive life. The unconscious, the irrational, the instantaneous, which are, as their names tell us, privations or negations of the voluntary and sustained forms of mental action, have replaced other models. One hardly any longer finds products of the desire for "perfection". In passing one may note that this out-of-date desire was bound to disappear in the face of the obsession with and insatiable thirst for originality. . . . The ambition to reach perfection admits and even requires heredity, imitation, or tradition, which are for it steps in its ascension towards the absolute aim it dreams of attaining. Originality rejects these things, yet thereby even more rigorously implies them—for its essence is to be different.'

We seem able to do anything with our wide and elaborate range of poetic methods except:—attain an eloquent simplicity, a true serenity, a natural uncloying sweetness, a powerful, direct and sustained expression of primary emotions; express a view of life that is coherent, inclusive and poetically realized; develop a dramatic action with real human persons; write a moving and significant narrative, or genuine love poetry, or a satire with consistent range and depth of penetration.

One of our great difficulties seems to be the number of exclusions poets are driven to make. It was Valéry in a note on Mallarmé who remarked that the poet reaches excellency by the number and quality of his *refusals*. This is true enough—perfection does require rigour, discrimination and refinement—yet coming from a modern poet it leaves one uneasy. We are so hag-ridden by the fear of falling into sentimentality, bathos, or naïveté that the poet becomes wary and evasive. Rarefaction and fastidiousness are not enough if poetry does not know how to be energetic, positive, warm and humane. Does not a great deal of modern poetry leave one with an impression of narcissism, coldness, emotional sterility, a failure of the heart?

IV

Some immediate good might be achieved if we had another look at the old doctrine of poetic *kinds*.

First there were developed distinct kinds of poetry, with much thought to appropriate styles and forms. Then new and

leasing effects were gained by a mixing of kinds. Then the original distinctions ceased to be understood and respected and their value was lost.

We have tended today towards a standard nondescript all-purpose 'short poem' in which the residues of all the styles and forms are mish-mashed together. We even seem to think that our enormous talents would be hindered by working within definite conventions such as the feebler powers of Chaucer, Jonson, Milton and Dryden found helpful.

One might start today by seeing what can be done within some of the old poetic kinds: eclogue, elegy, epistle, epigram, pithalamium, epyllion—to name only a few. They would need to be developed beyond archaism, but they might prove a salutary regimen. A decided tendency this way is already evident among some younger writers.

Bound up with this study of kinds, with their appropriate manners, is the study of the social tone of poetic speech. As one gets used to Chaucer one sees that his poetry was intimately related to an audience: it has complexities of mood and implication that are so managed as to keep the poem in tune with his public (or, perhaps, to tune the public to the poem); for instance, the precise balance of sympathy and condemnation, raillery and seriousness, in regard to Courtly Love which is attained in *Troilus and Criseyde* is directed towards an audience which understood well the tensions between religious orthodoxy and the religion of love'. Today it is a commonplace that the poet has got out of touch with a fragmented society, and this explains at least in part why so much poetry is a monologue that seems to lack a living and sensitive *communicative* tone, a sense of being quickened by shared reactions. Yet one must not exaggerate this breakdown in communication. The poet can acquire a small public sufficiently at one with him in his basic interests and predicaments to react sensitively to those shifts in tone and level; those traits of sub-implication and irony, which poetry can possess without loss of lucidity.

A third element in a possible new regimen is to explore what follows from adopting as a primary requirement the rule that a poem should be intelligible, in its surface meaning and general intent, on a first hearing aloud. (I say hearing aloud rather than silent reading because poetry does well to stay close to the conditions of vocal performance.) This is not advanced as an absolute requirement, but as a good general rule, for all times, but especially for the present, which has too little studied the conditions of immediacy and clarity.

In addition, it is time to get over our depreciation of subject-matter. A lot of poetry today is dull and trivial because it has nothing interesting or important to say. What is wrong with taking themes that have intrinsic interest and urgency? The Symbolists tried to expel from poetry the discursive element: they wanted it to be a pure essence, and spoke contemptuously of description, narrative, statement, reportage. But this forced them into a side-track. Today we have largely abandoned the search for *la poésie pure*, but subject-matter has not fully reclaimed its rights. Of course, if a poem is to be interesting for its subject-matter one must have something in one's head worth saying.

v

But merely literary manoeuvres do not go to the heart of the matter. It is necessary to fight one's way out of the paper bag of modern ideas. These may be so flimsy that one can poke one's finger through them, but they acquire great imaginary strength through the power of suggestion, that is, through the accepted notion that some kind of manufactured paper bag, such as naturalism or positivism, is the only wear for a free mind. Under the influence of this suggestion a brown paper ceiling is taken to be the sky, an exhausted atmosphere to be the common air, and the view within the bag to be reality.

The most enervating of these idea-envelopes that people walk around with is one that is so vague and impalpable and inarticulate as to be hardly describable as an idea: it is an attitude, an infection, the proper name of which is the English Malady. It is the modern man's residual creed: that *ideas do not matter*, that civilization can be maintained without intellectual commitments—and incidentally that literature can flourish on talent and sensibility alone, without strong organizing ideas.

Two generally remarked characteristics of the English are: lack of theoretical rigour, and the will to retain to a relatively high degree traditional attitudes and institutions. The two things are curiously connected. Only by inconsistency could the children of the Establishment retain traditional ways and values; but a sound sense and practical wisdom taught them to avoid putting into practice the full consequences lurking in their intellectual revolution. Hence arose amongst the English the conviction that a wise man sets little store by theoretical considerations and is content to live in an intellectual blur. They look askance when the breezes of their sceptical opinions, when unleashed in foreign lands, where they have free logical play, become unrestrained tornadoes.

But a price has gradually been paid for this admirable desire to have one's 'cake of custom' and eat it too. The traditional heritage of values and institutions has deteriorated because it is only partly desired and is protected only by sentiment and practical conservation, not by theory and doctrine; while all the time the anti-theoretical prejudice acquired by the English mind has continually eroded intellectual culture. A sterilizing empiricism has meant that the English have gradually ceased to be important originators in the field of basic ideas. They have made themselves eunuchs . . . for convenience's sake.

In literature the English have ended by having to get outsiders to do it for them.

VI

An emblem of the poet: the cicada. Born on the Tree of Nature, his life-course requires that he fall from the branch and go into the dark underground. There for perhaps many years he is hidden, feeding at the very roots of things, until an upward impulse sends him at last forcing his way through the heavy earth until he returns to the sun and air. There he sheds his skin and soon with vibrant body and head like a dance-mask his passionate song clangs and throbs through light and darkness. In the centre of his forehead he bears the small triple jewel of natural wisdom, the clustered three ocelli, signifying the powers of pleasure, understanding and love. Many fables have collected around this creature. The Greeks likened him to the gods because he was supposed to need no nourishment beyond a sip of dew. Alas, we know better, but the truth is also very strange and wonderful.

James McAuley

Already, by 1910, we find that many of the most accomplished writers in our language originate on the fringes of the English-speaking world, and, more importantly, that they make no attempt to cover up their origins by conforming to the standards of the metropolis. . . . Only a growing realization of the bankruptcy of England herself and the comparative richness of Irish traditions allowed Yeats to assume his later proud disguises. . . . The diminished importance of England's contribution to English literature, which is signified by the development of Yeats, has continued, and will continue to diminish during the present century.

A reviewer in THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT, 8 April 1958

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KROUBINTS FOR OUTPLANNING THE PLANNING BOARD

A. E. de Jasay

THE KROUBINT is a people's democratic currency in the time-honoured Ruritanian fashion, and the people who are trying to earn as much as they can of it are the managers of state firms, whose daily life on the tightrope is well worth a look for the comparison it provides between corporate capitalism on this side, and state capitalism on the other side, of the wire fence bisecting the Continent.

The Western company manager is an employee of the owners, and indirectly, as he will say, his real master is the customer. The Communist manager is directly and simply an employee of his customer,—not of the 'people' as the official slogans have it, but of the planning board. The identity of customer and owner, instead of simplifying, complicates matters in a sometimes startling way. The formal structure is meant to be that of a modern subsistence economy, where profit and loss in the mercenary sense have little meaning, for they involve, at the most, transfers from the right to the left pocket of the state. Nevertheless, there are the inevitable loopholes through which orthodox capitalism sticks in its ugly, though mercifully invisible, hand, rearranging matters in such a way that all-too-enlightened self-interest has something to bite on.

Production orders, handed down in broad outline from the council of ministers to the planning board, and in increasing detail from planning board to the ministry 'owning' a particular industry, from ministry to the directorate controlling firms in an industry branch, and from directorate to the firm, are supposed to be binding instructions from owner to executive employee. Failure to obey them carries the obvious sanction of dismissal, and the less obvious one of criminal proceedings against somebody somewhere along the line. In principle, this stick should suffice. In practice, the carrot proves to be indispensable in economic government. All along the chain of command and execution, doing as well as, or better than, one is told is rewarded by bonuses. Since salaries leave hardly any margin for the frills and bourgeois comforts of life, the bonus assumes an importance disproportionate to its amount, which is seldom more than twenty-five per cent of the flat salary itself. In some positions, particularly in 'non-productive'

ministry and directorate jobs, it is limited to a ceiling of twenty per cent, while out in the field, particularly in such 'good rackets' as the oil industry, fifty per cent or more can be made. However, people come to depend on the bonus, their spending habits become geared to it, and missing the bonus is a minor disaster for most managerial households.

The manager, or more precisely the executive 'troika' of manager, chief engineer and chief accountant of the Communist industrial firm, should therefore aim at the highest possible plan fulfilment figure (involving the highest possible bonus)—just as corporate managers are often supposed to be aiming at the highest possible profit. In effect, the troika would be most rash to do so. The firm is given a set of plan targets by the next highest planning authority, normally the appropriate directorate, specifying the volume and kind of output, materials usage, wage expenditure, prescribed savings on unit costs of production, and so on. According to the nature of the industry, the number of such targets (or 'plan indices' as they are called) the firm ought to meet may vary between half-a-dozen and half-a-hundred. The bonus system is extremely complicated, and is often changed, but it is fair to say that only two or three plan indices really matter, and of those the money volume of gross output (not of value added!) at fixed prices has the greatest weight for bonus purposes. The use of this gross concept means that a firm gets plan fulfilment credit for one million kroubints of output regardless of whether the raw material content of the total product was 0·2 million or 0·8 million kroubints. The more material-intensive the product, the easier it is to fulfil the output plan. This goes part of the way toward explaining the ubiquitous and chronic raw material shortages. The bias for choosing the product which takes the least labour and trouble and the most materials to manufacture, is only checked by rigidly prescribing for the multi-product firm the break-down of output and the processes it must employ, thus forcing it to produce the lines which, in managerial parlance, are 'hard to make'. Of course, this leads to still more inflexibility than there is anyway.

Now the firm's total output plan for a period may prescribe a production volume equal to one million kroubints at fixed prices. This is taken to be one hundred per cent, each per cent overfulfilment carrying a bonus at a flat scale. The executive troika could make a quick 'killing' by fulfilling the output plan to one hundred and ten or one hundred and twenty per cent. The target for the next period would then in all probability

be raised to just above the actual fulfilment figure, i.e. 1.15 million or 1.25 million kroubints would be the next one hundred per cent. This is analogous to the norm revision inflicted on manual workers and some professional people, and the managers react to it in the same way as the workers do: those who overfulfil by a large percentage are considered suckers, and the sound businessmen aim at a steady one hundred and five per cent or so. A modest five per cent above the target is felt to be the happy mean, resulting from that fine balancing of marginal advantages dear to the economist's heart; a lower figure would make the current bonus too thin (though making it easy to earn one in the next plan period), while a higher figure would yield a fat bonus now (but spoil the chances of the next one).

Even this, however, makes the planning of plan fulfilment sound too simple and smooth. In fact, both the setting of the plan target and the measurement of its actual performance are within reach of the invisible hand. For prestige and political reasons, the top authority (council of ministers, acting through the planning board) wants to set the highest possible targets. For financial reasons, the grass-roots executive organ (the troika of the firm) wants to be given the lowest possible ones. In between these two, each planning authority wants to receive a low target from above and to pass on a high one to the next-lower authority. The deputy minister or departmental chief in a ministry will therefore fight and bargain with the planning board, pointing to the raw material shortages, worker absenteeism and decrepit machinery in his sector and using what Party pull he has, to have his target reduced, or rather raised by less than the planning board propose. By the interaction of what is called top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top planning, the planning board and he will normally end up by 'splitting the difference'. Then he will turn round and charge out a somewhat higher aggregate of targets to the industrial directorates under him. They will fight back as best they can, but turning round will allocate to the firms they control plan targets amounting to a higher total than their own target. Thus each organ except the firm itself will have 'hidden reserves' in hand (while the firm has other means to get its own back). The object at each level is to insure your bonus; if your subordinate organs achieve a bare one hundred per cent average of their target (some overfulfilling and some falling short), you will still have achieved one hundred and five per cent of yours. Alternatively, you may let them off with a lower target and a comfortable overfulfilment if they cut you in on the bonus they get—for each firm

may occasionally be willing to bribe key persons in directorate or ministry to have some of its target shifted on to the back of another firm. Similarly, it may pay to earmark some of the prospective bonus for bribes to secure larger allocations of scarce materials or, in state retail trade, allocations of imported consumer goods which sell very fast and enable the sales plan to be overfulfilled.

However, if all the negotiating skill, 'connections' and artistry (at least one firm in a people's democracy used to have on its payroll a young woman whose sole duty was to dispense her favours as instructed) fail to lay the foundations of plan fulfilment, there is no bonus—yet it is the job of the chief accountant to make very sure that there shall be one. He must, in the last resort, outplan the planning board, and the principal means of doing so are the two kinds of 'plan fraud'.

Plan fraud, in which the chief accountant is usually assisted by a specialist, the 'plan man' of the firm, is so universal that state control auditors believe each and every management could be convicted of it. But since its more vigorous detection and prosecution would not particularly benefit anybody's pocket (its main effect would be less reassuring statistics relating to the same real production), only the more glaring instances are exposed.

In the first type of plan fraud, the books are merely made to overstate output in the present plan period (month, quarter or year) at the expense of the next, or some more distant, one. The firm may, in the current quarter, expect to have finished 0·5 million of output, and to have increased work-in-progress from one to 1·1 million—a total output of 0·6 million. Its output target is set at 0·67 million and its aim is to show 0·7 million kroubints—a sort of golden mean overfulfilment, carrying a safe bonus. Its work-in-progress is, on the average, deemed to be fifty per cent of the way toward completion. It will now have the so-called 'quality control department' declare work-in-progress, worth 0·1 million, as 'one hundred per cent finished', worth twice that amount on the books, bringing the total output figure up to 0·7 kroubints. Since the quality control people in the plant are themselves employees of the firm, the matter is not difficult to arrange. (A similar correcting operation can be performed on work-in-progress only, declaring it to be nearer completion than it actually is, and this does not even require the connivance of the quality control department.)

Sooner or later, and possibly as soon as the next plan period, the firm must bear the after effects of this operation; it must

carry out work for which it has already fraudulently claimed plan fulfilment credit. In other words, it must more than fulfil its target to be able to claim bare fulfilment. For reasons which are not hard to visualize, this often proves to be impossible. For one thing, the self-denial involved may be too unpalatable, for another, things may have been going from bad to worse. The management finds itself in the position of the cashier who had taken money from the till, fully intending to put it back once his spell of bad luck was over. The way to the second, and more serious, type of plan fraud is paved with just that sort of good intention.

The crudest means of catching up with the target arrears is to report a stock shortage, due to theft by unknown outsiders; the finished products which should be there according to the books were in fact there, but some people deficient in socialist morality must have got at them. A safer and somewhat more subtle means is, however, available thanks to the role played in the planning mechanism by the Marxist theory of value on the one hand, and to the need for finding some measure of work-in-progress for plan fulfilment purposes on the other. Work-in-progress is reckoned in, not at cost or market value, but at some notional percentage of the fixed price of the finished product, e.g. fifty per cent. To show high plan fulfilment, the plant will be temporarily switched to the production of some 'easy to make' semi-finished article, the cost (let alone the market value) of which is less than the fulfilment credit the firm can get for it on the basis of the notional percentage. A huge stock of such semis will be piled up, and will be declared redundant in the next period; it will be sold on behalf of the firm by a state wholesaling organization to some other state firm at something like its free market value. The 'loss' will be charged to the first firm's profit-and-loss account. This debit, however, will not affect the plan fulfilment account at all, because the latter is supposed to measure output at 'normal' prices, and not the way those prices are temporarily swinging away from the normal under pressure of a small planning error leading to the redundancy of something or other.

On a wider view, the incentives inherent in the very use of the carrot seem to render it inevitable that the planners should here and there be outplanned. By how much they are cheated at any one time cannot, in the nature of the case, be easily guessed. But the cumulative weight of small and big plan frauds committed at each line in the planning chain could well explain the obvious contrast between the official statistics,

telling a monotonous tale of one hundred per cent fulfilment and relative abundance, and the glimpses the observer gets of poverty, shortages, delivery delays, badly finished goods, abandoned projects and so on. The official statistics are not, as is widely believed, all deliberate dust-throwing. The truth seems rather to be that the planners' own eyes are so full of dust that they lack a steady enough aim for throwing it into other people's.

A. E. de Jasay

TO MY CHILDREN

Gwen Harwood

Time's husbandry is vain
for I have found his hoard
and robbed him of the grain
that cannot be restored.

Harvest on harvest sown
with stolen seed grows quick.
I count, and call my own
the living fields, so thick

that every crowding leaf
springing close-grained and bright
admits no note of grief
and mirrors back delight.

Children, in whom I praise
time's ripening increase,
be spendthrift while my days
decline to winter peace,

and for your children frame
this parable: that flesh
will change, and be the same;
dying, will flower afresh.

SHOULD CIVIC ART MAKE SENSE?

A SCULPTOR'S VIEW

Tom Bass

THE LOCAL war memorial or a stone cairn with a brass plaque on it to mark an historic place seems about as far as we are prepared to go in the direction of civic arts, with very few exceptions. When any move is made to go further the fallacy is vigorously argued in our parliaments and council chambers and party conferences that housing should come before civic arts intelligible or otherwise.

Although in this situation it may seem a rather abstract question, I want to suggest that in this new country we need the things that the civic arts can give us to refine and enrich our national and community life. It is through such art forms, better perhaps than in any other way, that we can come to a deeper consciousness of our entity as a people, and experience imaginatively the values by which we live.

It will be said of course that since we are a literate people there is no longer the need to communicate ideas through visual symbols and art forms as was done in earlier times. I should answer that a work of civic art which is a social emblem of beauty and significance has the power to communicate profound and complex ideas at a level of consciousness far beyond the power of words.

On the other hand there are artists whose work, if they did undertake a civic commission, would not make sense to ordinary people. They would say in answer to complaints that it is for the people to raise the level of their understanding if they want to appreciate their work though one could not always assume that the work they offered would even be trying to communicate ideas of civic importance. It might these days be merely a formal exercise or the projection of highly individual feelings.

Art can be and today often is the mere presentation of a private fetish, but in the great periods it has always served society by expressing the mysteries and wonder of creation: it has sought to open the vision of the people to an ultimate reality which transcends our material existence.

As a sculptor, I will naturally approach the question more particularly from that point of view, but the general principle applies to the other plastic arts. To me the sculptor today stands

in the same relation to society as he has done right down the ages. He gives to the tribe or the community the totems or emblems which embody for consciousness the communal beliefs, values and spiritual aspirations that sustain and mould them as a people. It is one of the great bugbears of literacy that because we can read we assume that we know these things adequately and no longer need to be reminded of them in the special mode of the visual arts. But the truth is that we do not know these things adequately and that the surest way to re-learn them is in the old way of archetypal symbols—as indeed any good advertising man knows.

The principal fact about our national situation in regard to civic art is that, though we have barely completed the first rough pioneering stage of settling the continent, we are now going headlong into advanced programmes of physical development, and so there is still very little energy to spare for the refinements of our social life. A second fact, resulting from the first, is that we are still a colonial people with strong natal attachments to the culture of Europe, which is still mother's milk to us. This further complicates our problem because Europe has her own cultural difficulties, in many ways the exact opposite of our own.

When the Renaissance tradition finally broke down towards the end of last century, a movement got under way which produced the most profound revolution in the whole history of art—driven on by parallel political, scientific and industrial developments. Art must always be subject to change and development because it is always an expression of the life of the time. But never before had the whole fabric and structure of art been so completely and deliberately disintegrated. Suddenly the old traditional standards and values were irrelevant and art was all of a heap like the pieces of an old clock—the modern movement in art has been like a minute and careful study of the pieces of the clock, singly or in various arbitrary combinations. It has been a very stimulating and exciting period—and it has given us a far deeper knowledge of the nature of art.

This modern movement in art as it is called is world wide because the historical forces behind it are not confined to any one country. We are caught up in it too; but whereas Europe is a vast treasure-house and can live on its reserves while the revolution is in progress, we live in a young country without accumulated artistic reserves, and even our natural beauties are rapidly receding and diminishing, leaving us with the endless sprawling ordinariness of our cities, towns, and suburbs which

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try out for some evidence that we are after all a civilized people with imagination and decent sentiment.

This to me is the precise distinction between the arts of the Old and New Worlds. The art of Europe is in the main a genuine expression of the realities of the situation in which it is produced; but we find ourselves in a relatively false position. Our art, instead of being motivated by the needs and pressures of our own social and physical environment, is very often the result of the stimulus of contemporary developments in European art, developments which we do not fully understand and cannot properly apply to our own situation. Doubtless we must not reject the basic language of form. This is our essential European heritage: we must continually refer to the pitch and standard of that ancient yet still vital tradition, and remain vulnerable to the shock of the highly civilized and competitive atmosphere of European art. But we must not allow it to overwhelm us or distract us from the real task waiting to be done in our own part of the world.

What we need is some form of popular art. It will not do to develop only the most refined and abstract forms of modern experimentation. Surely this would be like making motor cars which only a qualified automotive engineer could drive. To push the analogy a little further, a motor car that anybody can drive still requires the effort of learning to drive; and the more ordinary drivers there are, the wider the interest in the principles of automotive engineering. This is the sort of art we need: one which is available to the majority of reasonably intelligent and sensitive people and stimulates them to understand more of the underlying aesthetic principles. Purists will no doubt exclaim against this demand as a betrayal, but after all this has been the normal approach to art in previous times.

I am convinced that without necessarily lowering the standard it is possible to develop forms of civic art which would go half-way to meet the people and serve as a social emblematic art. This would moreover act as a bridge by which many people could get across to the 'purer' forms of art. I see the development of civic arts in this country as an historical necessity. It simply means that the artist's main objective would no longer be the exclusive world of the exhibition gallery and the private patron, but the whole of society.

What are the basic strategies of such a civic art?

To me the first and most important of these is to capture the interest of the casual observer, and one sure way to do this is to arouse curiosity. Man is, as he should be, insatiably curious

and he will go a long way to satisfy this need. Most art arouses some curiosity, but it will soon turn into a flat rejection of the work if there is nothing we can identify as suggesting meaning. So having aroused curiosity, to hold the interest we must suggest meaning, and if the artist's intention is to communicate ideas this should be simply done. Once we have managed to suggest that the work contains an idea, or maybe a subtle complex of ideas, our man is beginning to be quite deeply involved. He is curious, interested, and the scent of an idea will soon stimulate the imagination: at that point the artist has achieved his first really important objective.

When the imagination is aroused the work of art really gets the chance to work on the mind of the person at the level that is proper to art. It is here that man is really innocent, responsive and teachable; this is the part of him above the ratiocinative that can respond to beauty. It is here, or perhaps a little beyond it, that he becomes aware that he has a spiritual life as well as a rational existence. Here art can communicate the ultimate realities to men. I don't suggest that this can or will happen to every second man in the street but it can happen to many if the artist will provide the simple devices to make the work accessible at the first impact.

Let me try to explain how this kind of art form is produced, taking sculpture for illustration. The kind of art I have described is essentially symbolic but not in the degraded Victorian way. The kind of symbolism I am describing has the mysterious power to be found in some primitive art as well as in Byzantine and Romanesque work. For the sculptor this kind of symbolic art has three parts:

- ideal or concept;
- corresponding symbol;
- formal equivalent of the symbol.

The three parts can be abstractly distinguished but in practice they form a unity, each simplifying yet enriching the other.

For example, some years ago an international competition was held for a piece of sculpture to commemorate The Unknown Political Prisoner—on the analogy of The Unknown Soldier. Many sculptors took the human figure as the basis for a symbol of the horror of political intolerance. In such a symbol the figure must be so imbued with the political, social and moral ideas inherent in the theme that it becomes something more than a human figure. It is transformed and transcended by the weight of suffering and the urge to freedom in the human spirit. This is no mere representation of a man, it is the human embodiment

SHOULD CIVIC ART MAKE SENSE?

of the ideas of freedom and justice, and intolerance and brutality, expressed in forms suited to the nature of the material.

To the ordinary layman the full meaning and implications of such a symbol may not be readily or easily understood—in fact the prize-winning entry of that competition was an extreme and difficult example, which aroused controversy. But if the image is to be potent and effective, overworked, banal and degraded symbolisms must be avoided and analogies must be drawn from the life and idiom of our own time.

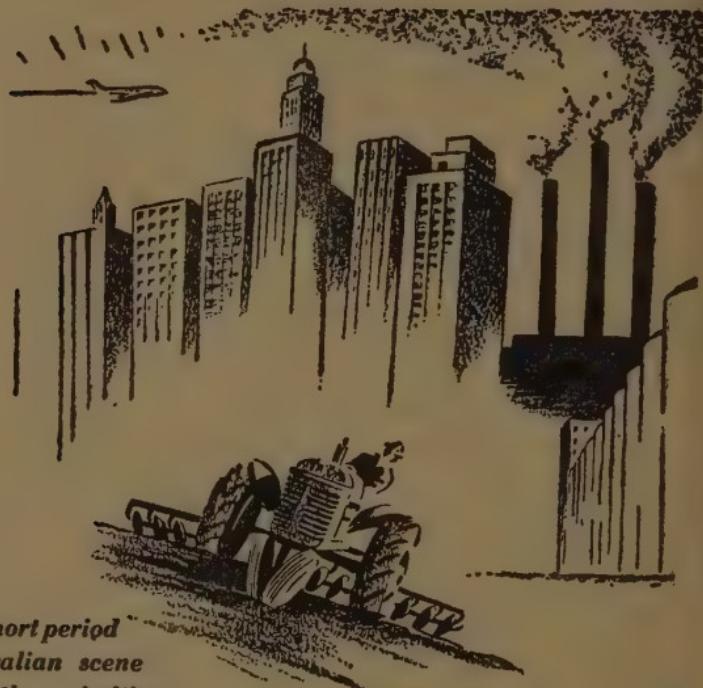
It is certain that the work of art that yields its full meaning slowly will be the one most likely to retain its validity, and the reward it offers will be in proportion to the effort made to understand it. The best work will have something to say to each man at his own level of understanding.

I have suggested that society dare not deprive itself of the best that her artists can give. Ultimately we must benefit from even the most baffling works of our best artists—and in this sense I say that it is not necessary that civic art should make sense to the untrained eye. On the other hand I am equally certain that the artist and society would both benefit from the development of civic arts which aim to serve the community, to enrich the imagination, to clarify and enlarge the sensibilities and the consciousness of the people.

Art in this way would be released from its present narrow exclusiveness and its feeble dependence on European styles; it would attain the dignity, freshness and conviction of an art which is the genuine expression of the life of the people. This is a big open democratic country with a big future and it needs that kind of art.

Tom Bass

ON THE THRESHOLD OF GREATER THINGS . .



In an historically short period of time the Australian scene has moved from the primitive shack of the pioneer to the best living conditions that modern civilisation can bring.

Irrigation and mechanisation on the land, and science and industrialisation in the cities, have brought to this country astounding development and the promise of even greater things to come.

Whether on the land or in the cities, the burden of progress rests heavily on the basic metal steel, and the Australian Steel Industry is playing its part in the great forward surge of our nation . . .



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AND SUBSIDIARIES

A NEW TASTE FOR OLD WINE

Frank Keane

INHERITING an authoritative English back-bar taste for beer, Australians for a long time regarded wine-drinking as a sort of unseemly Continental elegance, a precious indulgence by the elite. If you wanted to be an overt, better-than-Australian host, you would produce at your table, with platoons of polished glasses, some of the fine imported wines, bearing the great chateau names of Europe. It made a splendid, glittering impression.

Today all that has changed. The people are different and the wine is different.

From being the prerogative of the fancy few, wine-drinking has become the simple custom of ordinary people. And the wine that comes to their table is hardly ever the renowned chateau wines, but almost always the matured wines of our own soil.

At its highest, Australian wine today is as good as fine wine anywhere. Down below that peak, experts agree that its general commercial quality is higher than the average quality of wine anywhere else, including France. Even in France, as all travellers know, the vin rouge and vin blanc can be as near the bottom of the scale of quality as the few select and costly chateau wines can be to the top.

In France and Germany first quality wines can cost 30s. a bottle and more. But Australia's best can be had for under 10s. If you are discerning you can get some for as little as 6s.

The Australian drift to wine is shown in these recent statistics: in the last two years wine consumption has increased from 8,500,000 gallons to more than 10,500,000 gallons a year.

And it's not, as some people might imagine, an increase merely in the sweet fortified wines. The sharpest point of the rise is in the sale of light dry red and white table wines which have shot up, in those two years, by twenty-five per cent.

A brooding pastime with the connoisseur is to lament that Australian wineries turn out such a lot of sweet sherry. The average connoisseur can't take sweet sherry. He wants it dry. But there is such a demand for the sweet type that Australian wine-makers—after all, like all other wine-makers, they are in business—produce it for the market.

In spite of the occasional critic, there is nothing suspicious or unwholesome about sweet sherry. It is made, and matured,

like other Australian wines, in wineries gleaming with modern machinery, steam-cleaned and spotless, probably the most hygienic in the world. It is good, sound, honest wine, even if it doesn't appeal to expert palates.

It has another merit. Like all sweet wines, it can do its job of helping to find new converts to wine. Almost all strangers to wine try something sweet first. It may be a sweet sherry, or a port or a sauterne. It is after that introduction that most people turn inquiringly to the dry wines, the light clarets and burgundies, hocks and rieslings that can add so much enjoyment even to the simplest meal.

This change from sweet to dry has always been noted, but at last it has got itself into some figures. In 1957, when 10,000 people tried Australian wine at a public tasting at the Sydney Royal Show, three out of every four called for a sweet wine. In 1958, with 12,000 at the Royal Show tastings, the sweet wine orders were only one to one with the dry. This conformed with the twenty-five per cent increase in dry wine sales.

Australian wine wasn't always as good as it is today. Apart from a few rare products—like a famous claret produced by one of our earliest vigneron's at what is now Lilydale, Victoria, a claret so fine that when it was entered in a Paris Exhibition, the judges were convinced that it was a Bordeaux wine, a ring-in—the bulk of our early wines were not of much quality. Perhaps that's being gentle. Anyhow, up to fifty years ago London merchants put them contemptuously at the bottom of their lists, under the sub-heading 'Kitchen Wines'.

From there to today's excellence is probably the swiftest advance in five thousand years of the world's wine history. They are not the same as European wines. The Australian soil and climate—perhaps the tillage, too—have given them their own bouquet, their own tang. They are different, but, at their best, just as good. And that is what overseas experts have been telling us for years.

Wine-makers from Champagne, tasting one of Australia's fine champagnes at a winery in Victoria, have assured the manager, Colin Preece, that France can produce nothing better. Visitors from Bordeaux, Burgundy and the Rhine, pottering around amid the warm wine reek of our spruce modern wineries in South Australia, and the not so modern but romantic Hunter Valley, have assured us that our best light and heavy reds are right at the top in world class, and that at least one of our rieslings is as good as anything that ever came out of the Rhine Valley. There is no reason why this should not be so.

Lay support of the experts comes from the Queen of England and the Duke of Edinburgh. The Queen's favourite sherry is an Australian one, while the Duke has praised a light claret type from South Australia as being 'as fine as anything produced in France'.

One reason for the improvement in quality in the commercial production of Australian wine is that our wine-makers have gone flat out for two things: hygienic production, and scientific wine-growing and wine-making.

The hygiene asserts itself in the glint of stainless steel as you wander from one great winery to another in South Australia's red and gold vineyard, the Barossa Valley, or along the Murray, around Mildura, Renmark or down on the Murrumbidgee. These wineries are the most hygienic ever built. Having come in late, after five thousand years of erratic wine-making, Australia has been able to avoid the worst of European traditions and slide straight into modern mechanical production. There is a lot of romantic nonsense talked about the advantage of unhygienic foot-trampling methods using cheap labour.

The science in our wine has blossomed out finally into a half-million pounds Wine Research Institute in Adelaide which was opened this year in order to study how we can further improve the quality and production of our vines.

The University of California has sent its Associate Professor of Oenology (wine-making), Dr A. Webb, to the Institute to study our methods of making flor sherry. Dr Webb, explaining why he didn't go to Spain, the home of flor sherry, said: 'Beyond question, the Director of your Institute, John Fornachon, is the world's foremost authority on flor sherry production by modern methods.'

Another overseas scientist working at the Institute is Bulgarian-born Dr Michael S. Mintscheff. He is studying, specially, grapes of different kinds as they are grown in different districts.

A critic could have said of some of our earlier wine-makers that they were more interested in quantity than quality. But today, in the heat of competition in a big industry, it would be truer to say that the wine-maker's aim is higher quality. As a businessman, he wants quantity, too, of course, but Australia's good name for wine impels him, even if he's reluctant, to put quality at the top.

This pressure comes down on more vigneron in Australia than in most other places. Countries that have a few prestige wines and underneath them a whole swag of indifferent vin ordinaire stuff, need worry only about their prestige wines.

Australia, with the great bulk of its wines so far above the world's average must be constantly concerned about the quality of *all* its wines.

We have, after all, become in a brief period one of the world's great wine producing nations. Wine now ranks as fourth of our primary industries. In the last twenty-five years production has doubled. The capital invested has been computed at roughly £50,000,000. Operating our 112,000 acres of vineyards alone costs over £1,000,000 a year. Another £1,000,000 goes each year in maintaining and developing the industry generally.

From that achievement, let us glance back for a moment at the beginnings.

The first vines were planted in 1788 by Governor Phillip at Farm Cove, now Sydney's Botanic Gardens. They bore good grapes. Mrs John MacArthur, writing to an English friend in 1791 said: 'The Governor sent me some bunches this season, as fine as any I ever tasted.'

But they made atrocious wine.

Nine years later, London was seriously discussing in despatches with the new Colony how wine-growing could be improved. At this time Britain had in jail two French prisoners of war. The British Government worked it out ponderously that, being Frenchmen, they should know all about wine. So they liberated the prisoners, on their undertaking that they would go to Australia for three years, work in the vineyards and instruct others in the craft of making wine.

Of course, it didn't work. The Frenchmen, bless them, were just Frenchmen, not vignerons. They knew no more about making wine than the average German knew about writing a Beethoven symphony.

So, after three years, Governor King was reporting sadly back to London: 'They know very little of their business.' He brusquely returned one Frenchman, sentimentally retained the other on a year's trial, since he had made 'some very sound cyder from peaches'.

Whatever the merit of his cider, he made no wine that anybody could drink.

No great enterprise ever had such a fumbled start. Yet there was abroad in the Colony such a determination to make good wine that, as one experiment followed another, wine-growing became at last a reality. That was only a little more than one hundred years ago. It is a considerable achievement.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A HUMORIST

C. Semmler

IF WE are to be honest about it, the cults of Gide, Proust, D. H. Lawrence, Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, Pound, even Mr Eliot, rejected or assimilated, have closed. Their writings have become or are becoming material for the burrowing researches of Ph.D. students. The trouble is, of course, that academic machinery cannot handle fun; that is one reason why the university despatches on Joyce have not been too gay.

Of all these 'first men of a Future that has not materialized' (as Wyndham Lewis described his coterie), Joyce looks like lasting longest, for a couple of very good reasons; first because he is the most significant of the obscurity purveyors, second, and much more important, because at long last the critics and scholars are beginning to appreciate his comic powers. Not in vain then, Joyce had written to Harriet Shaw Weaver in 1935—'Perhaps I shall survive, and perhaps the raving madness I write will survive and perhaps it is very funny.'

Although I am more concerned in these few notes with the humour than the obscurity of Joyce, it is worthwhile mentioning that obscurity may in itself be a form of communication. 'Anyone can get tired of anything and so they do not know it but they get tired of feeling they are understanding and so they take pleasure in having something that they feel they are not understanding.'¹ After all, art cannot be created out of commonsense though commonsense can destroy art. And it is not enough to call obscurity decadent and Alexandrian, to say that Joyce, Gertrude Stein and others are over-valued. Our literature and our sensibility would have been much poorer without them. Obscurity in the arts, as Cyril Connolly has observed, may well be a symptom of an extremely stable and prosperous society from Mallarmé, Lautreamont, and the Impressionists down through Henry James, Meredith and Conrad to Joyce and Klee.

Joyce, as a humorist, was probably the last of the Dublin character-part geniuses. Wilde, Shaw, Yeats, James Stephens—even Oliver St John Gogarty—all gave themselves roles in Dublin's verbal circus, a place of wits and grammarians. But Joyce was a lord of language with a genius for parody and bright

¹ Francis Russell: *Three Studies in Contemporary Obscurity*.

disorder. In addition, with his astonishing memory he had the delight in playing with fundamental ideas that often seizes the lapsed Catholic. Now parody has a long and reputable (or disreputable) history in Ireland from the days of the bards and the goliard scholars down to Mangan and Joyce—but Joyce's particular brand was shot through with that brilliant mockery exemplifying the revolt of the scholar against the clergy as well as that of the humanities against science and pseudo-science. Jung objected that underneath Joyce's work there was a 'metaphysical void'; it is known he thought life meaningless. This belief is no fatal disadvantage to a comic writer, and Joyce, perhaps as a result, found much of his comic material in the chaos of the private mind. But whereas his many imitators have turned on their tape recorders and tediously taken down the text of the ordinary mind going about its business, Joyce was the first of the editors, and his edited versions poke malicious fun at the lower middle classes he wished to dissociate himself from. Cunningly he exploited the Irish imagination which always dreams of heroic stature; his method was the tragic-comic aggrandizement of the society he was raised in, so that the ordinary figures of *Dubliners* and *Ulysses* become magnified, and Earwicker the pub-keeper becomes a latter-day Finn McCool. But always it is the comic eye that looks through the magnifying glass.

Professor Empson has reminded us that Joyce meant *Ulysses* as a very gay book, about how he escaped from the dire conditions in which he describes himself. He made his friends treat Bloomsday² as his private Christmas, an occasion for vaguely farcical rejoicing. Norah Joyce recalled her husband late at night laughing in his room 'over that book of his'. Of course he laughed, and often. How tiresome that all the serious Ph.D. students forget this! One can even read the chuckles between the lines of his letters, as when he wrote in October 1925 from Paris—'I composed some wondrous devices during the night and wrote them out in the dark only to discover that I had made a mosaic on top of other notes so I am now going to bring my astronomical telescope into play.' *Finnegans Wake*, he admitted once, was a game, but a game he had learnt to

² 'On the sixteenth of June 1954 a group started from the Martello Tower on the excursion known to thousands. A cynic remarked that the procession of cars and horse-drawn cabs resembled a funeral without a body; but a true-blooded Irishman noted that there were plenty of spirits. With stops at pubs in Monkstown, Williamstown and Ringsend, it has not yet been determined where the procession ended.' (Richard M. Kain in *Joyce, the Man, the Work, the Reputation*).

play in his own way. He would certainly have been the first to deplore the too much 'finicking about Finnegan and fiddling with his faddles'.*

The book is brimful of fun anyhow, and deserves to be tackled accordingly, not probed into and around with skeleton keys and exegetical footnotes. Take for instance Dolph and Kev during their study period surveying the whole world of human learning. They have had their days at 'literature, politics, economy, chemistry, humanity, etc., Duty, the daughter of discipline, the Great Fire at the South City Markets, Belief in Giants and the Banshee, a Place for Everything and Everything in its Place, Is the Pen Mightier than the Sword?, A Successful Career in the Civil Service, The Voice of Nature in the Forest. . . .' Straightaway we know where we are—in the World of the Goons. Spike Milligan once answered a critic by saying that if the Goon Show was the sole inheritor of James Joyce's literary legacy it was in good hands. 'More than one Goon show has been prompted by characters in *Ulysses* and at times let's face it, *Finnegans Wake* does become a Goon Show.'³ To which we can add Joyce himself, 'My dear sir! In this wireless age any owl rooster can peck up bostoons.'*

The fact is that Joyce in *Finnegans Wake* was well abreast of this wireless age: there is even a television show (a 'tolvtubular high fidelity daildialler') with a couple of comics 'crackajolking like a hearse on fire'.* There are the bright young boys of the Brains Trust, and there are even the forerunners of those excellent hypergamy-practising heroes of Mr Amis and Mr Braine who refuse to be 'warmed off the ricecourse of marrimoney under the Helpless Corpses Enactment'.*

Dr Johnson, confronted with bores, fools and people he disliked generally was wont to withdraw into contemplation of his great toe; Lucky Jim in rather similar circumstances, thinks of a few lines from Joyce: 'For a moment he felt like devoting the next ten years to working his way to a position as art critic on purpose to review Bertrand's work unfavourably. He thought of a sentence in a book he'd once read. "And with that he picked up the bloody old Towser by the scruff of the neck and by Jesus he near throttled him." This too made him smile and Bertrand's beard twitched, but he said nothing to break the pause.'⁴ And whether it is the 'citizen' along with the 'bloody mangy mongrel Garry-

* All quotations so marked are from the text of *Finnegans Wake*.

³ In the *New Statesman and Nation*, 13 April 1957.

⁴ Kingsley Amis in *Lucky Jim*.

Nan McDonald

owen' waiting at Barney Kiernan's pub for 'what the sky will drop in the way of drink'; or Matthew Arnold appearing at the brothel window in Nighttown, or the unfortunate conscience-stricken tavern-keeper Earwicker trying to live down that disgraceful business at Phoenix Park, there is abundant rich and rewarding comedy in Joyce to think back upon.

C. Semmler

THE HATTERS

Nan McDonald

The hut in the bush of bark or rusty tin,
The feel of eyes watching, willing you to be gone:
Here lives a hatter. He has done with the world.
Whatever it was in the end he could not bear—
To look in the face of lecher and fool and see
Himself; the rub of the mask on bleeding skin;
The heavy yoke of God, daily put on,
To endure all things, and give back love again—
He has chosen the bush, its simpler cruelty,
Its certain peace. I, too, could break the snare,
Take the hatter's path, say no to God and men . . .
Yet from such an end, good Lord, deliver me.

My grandfather, riding down Araluen way,
A young man then—it is eighty years and more
Since the rocks of those wild hillsides shone for him
In the yellow sun, and the singing river ran
Clear over nuggets of gold—passed carelessly
The humpy hidden in vines from the bright day
And a hatter fired at him from the dark of the door.

Solemn thought—at least to me, you may laugh if you will—
That if his aim had been better I should not be.
More solemn, that in the end, between man and man,
There is no choice but this: to love or kill.
From the blood of my brother, Lord, deliver me.

Another lived in the sandhills, a sea-lulled hollow,
And raised a sign to ward off peering eyes:
'Beware of the lion'. Any trick was fair against them
But I think he believed it, had seen at morning there
On the rippled beach, through the fine-pricked tracery
Of bird and crab, strange tracks he dared not follow;
Or at twilight, when the silver dune-grass sighs,
Had seen the tawny sand, that slept all day,
Warm and quiet, rise up now, move stealthily
About his hut. Still he cries to me, 'Beware!
Beware the beast that lurks along this way!'
From the claws of madness, Lord, deliver me.

And in the mountains behind Jamberoo,
The bush dead still at noon, clouds hanging low,
I came on a hut, close barred, the windows darkened,
On its door one word: 'Silence!' And all around
A hush so deep no sound, it seemed, could be
Unwelcome—the shriek of a black cockatoo
Though it boded storm, the hungry cry of a crow,
Even human speech, so rare in that lost place.
I did not knock; I had no wish to see
One who desired a silence more profound.
What hand would have opened to me there? What face?
From the love of death, dear Lord, deliver me.

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Look well into the records of those who have achieved worthwhile ambitions and are happy in their work. Chances are you'll find they did not do it all alone. Somewhere along the line, someone else put in the good word, someone else opened the door or pointed the way or removed the obstacle.

Hostility, apathy, or goodwill — why not choose the right one? It is so simple, too — to show goodwill is to earn goodwill!

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MY TOWN IN FAULKNER COUNTRY

Peter Hastings

CHAPTER XXI: J. K. MATSON

I WASN'T yet born so could not hope to tell, divulge or relate all that happened in Hamilton that steamy, sun-blinding May afternoon, happened fair enough in the centre of Main Street; couldn't even know for sure, in all certainty, what took place even in retrospect and through other eyes although J. K. Matson filled in the eluding, teasing gaps in active (he always said active for actual) fashion as if he was able to observe, probe and divine all Pocomoke County with his too damned intelligent eyes flickering and too damned intelligent mind ticking over, accelerating, racing furiously from fact to fact and fitting each to each without leaving a rough seam.

Cousin Ewan saw bits of the pattern of the sad events which led circuitously, arduously, inevitably to it, the scandal, the tragedy; that is Cousin Ewan plus Uncle Justin or rather Uncle Justin plus maybe Cousin Ewan. Anyways between them, especially as Uncle Justin was what they call a protagonist sort of, Homeric, white haired and too damned noble for his own good, they saw it with their own special view, gave it, the tragedy, the disgrace, the catastrophe, their special interpretations so that between them all the truth, or rather various bits of the truth, have come out, were bound to come out as they involved the Snapes family as do most things that happen in Hamilton (involve the Snapes, I mean); as if Hamilton couldn't live long without the scourge of the Snapes, without their long, sullen faces, their feel for corruption and corrupting which made most of us feel at times that somewhere in the world must be a special quality of un-Snapishness to prove a special talisman but that we knew for all that Hamilton might want it, aspire to it, desperately desire it, it (Hamilton) would never, never get it.

Of course it was J. K. Matson, blinking in the sunlight like some ancient, intelligent saurian, who knewed the facts, knewed that Rube Snapes had married Elma Beauchamp, had come down out of the eaten-out tobacco country to Hamilton, Mississippi; had proposed, won, and married Elma Beauchamp. Had knewed (Matson) that Snapes had taken her to San

Miguel, Texas, and returned with her not nine months later with a child that already walked. Not only walked, by God, but walked and talked. Matson, himself, who knowed with quiet, decisive, incontrovertible firmness that ever'one else were wrong and he was right, that Elma Beauchamp had travelled those alien miles to Texas married to a man (Snapes) whom she hated and carrying a child that wasn't his'n, had never been his'n which he showed by the high, relentless resolve of his hatred toward it all its growing days until it (Jenny, the child) shook off the dust and shame of Hamilton forever. And for that same ineluctable reason of hatred and passion and some other thing—some shameful thing—Rube Snapes had returned to Hamilton just as ever'one was congratulating ever'one else that the worst of the Snapes had left Hamilton, had crossed never to return that dusty line demarcating Pocomoke County from the next (which name I don't know for I never aims to go there). Yes Snapes came back and as so often happens it was that niggrah Fallin' Stock who knewed the last word when he said Snapes's return only goed to prove sho' enough how wrong folks can be.

Snapes's return was more than a triumph, more than the culmination of plan, plot, purpose, it was a revenge and set in train them things which make up this whole, damned, sad story which I'm fillin' in and which ain't all that easy; a story that really begins with Jenny who was in a way Snapes's child but not born of his loins, his passion or what passed for passion in a Snapes. Leastways she warn't born of his bed and Elma's who had cuckolded him on somebody else though there warn't nobody who could say who that somebody else was for sure unless it was Matson. Anyways Jenny growed up right enough into a beautiful young woman without the bloom of corruption and shame and doubt which was her mother's and wasn't hers.

Wasn't hers by reason of her innocence which is merely not being hurt by what you know or perhaps not knowing what hurts you; her innocence which gave to her eyes not olive not hazel the shade, colour and tint of deepest amber. At sixteen she walked like a thoroughbred pointer, her body low slung and her legs all bowed out, a thing of sheer canine beauty to arrest any sharecropper in his field, any gentleman entrenched on the porch of his *ante bellum* mansion, all sprigged out in muslin and high shoes and butterfly hat which her mother (Elma) had sent from Memphis provin' that she (Elma) could wring a few dollars out of the worst of the Snapes had she a mind, a passion, a fancy to it.

Of course it was Uncle Justin who became involved, involved in the worst, the most terrible, the most pitiable fashion with this un-Snapes love child. Have I not said that he is the protagonist of this sad story and therefore wasn't (isn't) it right that he should see in her something to be saved from what he called, what we all called, savage Snapishness? Something to be kept the only pure, uncorrupted, unsullied thing in all Hamilton? He simply waylaid her in the street; a white haired, book-larned lawyer simply waylaid a young and trembling girl in Main Street, observing her shaking like dogwood in May, and asked her courtly, no, gently commanded her: 'Miz Jenny, let us take a walk.' Well, they did and it seems, or so Cousin Ewan and J. K. Matson insist, they did quite often and what's more nobody larned where they went for nobody gave a damn for a long, long time. That is nobody took no notice until it, the tragedy, the cataclysm, burst under the noses of the ladies of the town, them ladies which (who) never forgave Uncle Justin for preferring Jenny to theirselfs and could but hate a Snapes for being so preferred. Anyways they conjectured enough, them ladies, and fancied and fabricated at the Ladies' Baptist, Methodist and Episcopal afternoons but they never noways got near the truth which in fact was to prove shocking enough, worse than anything they could have figured, anticipated, sensed.

Meanwhile they jest sat and enjoyed theirselfs knowin' that the scandal, the monstrous, improper thing between Uncle Justin and Jenny Snapes couldn't go on. Nor could it. Rumour, slander and fear reached out to everyone in Hamilton, a feelin' that made us uneasy, ashamed and ill to think about, reached out until it lapped against Justin's own house and own family, until his own brother sat white-faced across the dinner table to burst out in a shocked whisper, 'This shameless traffic between you an' Jenny Snapes. Goddamn it Justin, it jest can't go on,' to rise knuckle-white and stride blindly away with pain, agony and humiliation. No, it couldn't go on, this thing that Uncle Justin with shining eyes called an 'i-dyll' and Rube Snapes called abruptly without apology, for all Hamilton, all Pocomoke, all Mississippi, to hear, a 'see-duction'. Whatever Jenny called it she kept secret behind them golden, glowing amber eyes, a proud, strenuous, inviolable secret. J. K. Matson saw it again all different to ever'one else and he was there when they (the snoopers, the prurient, the shamed and ashamed) tracked them two down to what even the niggrahs in the streets were shamelessly calling a 'hideyout' which proved to be the drugstore on Main Street where Uncle Justin and Jenny were found

spooning icecream. On the table between them lied a pile of books, that is three books, which must have come by mail from Memphis, even New York maybe, for there ain't no books to be got in Hamilton 'less you count the Sears Roebucks that pass around. Of course it was J. K. Matson who got a look at them books, or at one of them (a golden treasu-ree of somethin' or other he says) before Rube Snapes moved in cold, precise, venomous like a rattlesnake, no that warn't right either, but all bunched up with hate, rage and frustration, pushing his way through all of them church ladies scarce believing their eyes, the irrefutable evidence of their attuned, cherished and hungering senses, so that his snake eyes flickered over them two before he said, 'So this is what it is. You been a-teachin' her to read.' His hand glided out, struck once, twice and the books slithered off'n the table.

It was much more than a sigh escaped them ladies, more even than the mass, spontaneous inhalation and exhalation of shocked disbelief or rather confirmation of their worst, most anguished, most inaccessible suspicion and torment. Had they but confronted that unhappy pair in a Memphis who'house, in a pink and blue satin-lined New Orleans love bower they would have grappled with it, digested it and perhaps some time have understood it but this was a shame too deep even to fuse, identify and eventually submerge with Hamilton's dishonour.

It was after that shameful fight when Justin could only jest talk between puffed lips and through blinding tears when he said to J. K. Matson, 'It was only because we were bored', it was after that that J. K. Matson with his damned intelligent mind divined before he knowed that Jenny had taken train, auto or Greyhound Coach across Pocomoke County's boundary line never aimin' to return; believed and credited that wherever she went and in what conditions she would scream in rage, boredom and spite if ever she heard again of Hamilton; knowed for sure and certain that she warn't nohow, noways coming back; intuited in blinding certitude that she and the city of Hamilton and the people of Hamilton were (was) incorrigibly and invincibly awry to one another, for ever and ever.



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THE SKELETON OF ASIA

Eugene Kamenka

AT FIRST sight, one expects the four hundred and fifty closely-packed pages of Professor Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism* (Yale University Press) to make up a monumental book. Only as one nears the end does one realize the expectation was wrong. It is an intelligent, perceptive, scholarly and often incredibly suggestive book, but never does it even approach the monumental. For Professor Wittfogel is rather like a brilliant anatomist lecturing on the growth and development of an organism. His incisive description of the organism's skeletal structure lays all the necessary foundations for grasping its movement and growth—but the anatomist becomes so absorbed in his task that he neglects his functional aim, and ends with a dead skeleton instead of a living being.

In the field of Oriental studies, however, the mistake is more natural than in biology. For the outstanding thing about Oriental despotism and Oriental society for three thousand years has been its comparatively static quality, the immunity of its classes and institutions from the radical social changes that have swept the West. Karl Marx, in two well-known articles published in the *New York Daily Tribune* in 1853, accounted for it thus:

'Climate and territorial conditions,' Marx argued, made 'artificial irrigation by canals and waterworks the basis of Oriental agriculture.' Water control 'necessitated in the Orient, where civilization was too low and the territorial extent too vast to call into life voluntary association, the interference of the centralizing power of the government.'

In other words, the need for government-directed waterworks gave birth to the Asian state, while the allegedly dispersed condition of the Oriental people and their agglomeration in self-supporting villages permitted its age-long perpetuation.

Wittfogel, now Professor of Chinese History in the University of Washington and director of the Chinese History project at Columbia, has studied the implications of Marx's statement for Chinese and Asian history for more than thirty-five years. He still accepts the first part of the statement, though he would qualify the second. In fact, he has done as much as any man living to clarify and support the Marxist concept of a specifically Asian mode of production, until the Comintern ideologists dropped the concept as politically harmful and Wittfogel himself began to apply it to the Soviet Union, seeing it as a politically bureaucratic state in the worst traditions of Oriental Despotism. All this has made Wittfogel one of those first-rate historical sociologists who combine an appreciation of the importance of Marx's search for fundamental social categories with a lively awareness that societies develop not in the unilinear fashion postulated by Marx, but through the interaction of a great many different factors.

In *Oriental Despotism*, Professor Wittfogel sets out to give us the most general conclusions of his thirty-five years of research and theoretical struggle—to lay bare the political and economic structure of Oriental society, or, as Wittfogel prefers to call it, of hydraulic (*Wasserbau*) society. The hydraulic society, Wittfogel argues, can be found not only in the Orient and the Near East, but also in the higher agrarian civilizations of pre-Spanish America, and there are hydraulic parallels in parts of East Africa and the Pacific, especially in Bali and Hawaii. It differs fundamentally from the non-hydraulic civilizations of the West in the utter political importance of property. It arises in

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conditions where irrigation and flood control need to be performed on a large scale, but it also depends on favourable institutional and ideological settings. The irrigational activities in the Netherlands and Italy produced no hydraulic society because they were part of a wider, non-hydraulic setting that dominated them.

The State that arises in consequence, Wittfogel goes on, is completely managerial in a political way, having to organize and control what are often fantastic numbers of corvée labourers. The State in hydraulic society is always stronger than the entire rest of society. It may allow, as in China, politically irrelevant forms of association (e.g., family and village), but only as long as they remain politically irrelevant. The tendency in hydraulic society is toward total power, total terror, total submission (e.g., physical prostration before Emperors and satraps, castration and total loneliness). But no government can control everything—there is a Law of Diminishing Administrative Returns—and the hydraulic State concentrates simply on keeping everything outside its own control entirely sub-political.

The next three chapters Wittfogel devotes to analysing the various types of hydraulic societies (compact, loose, marginal, sub-marginal) and the way in which they may interact with non-hydraulic civilizations (e.g., in Russia which, according to Wittfogel, adopted the hydraulic form of government only after the Tartar occupation). This, I think, is one of the weakest sections of the book—Wittfogel provides no overall picture of the specific societies he is classifying, and only the specialist could tell just how convincing the classification is. But he does succeed in reinforcing one of his main themes—that social stratification in hydraulic societies is based on actual or potential administrative power, and not at all on property or wealth, which is kept insecure and politically insignificant.

Chapter nine is by far the most readable and in some ways now the most striking part of the work. Wittfogel here traces—with much of the textual fervour of the old-style Bolshevik—the way in which Marx vacillated over his Asian concept, and how Engels and later official Soviet theoreticians suddenly began to deny the existence of a specifically Asian mode of production in which political classes were not based on property. Marx himself, Wittfogel argues, vacillated not because of any doubt over the facts, but because the postulation of a despotism based entirely on its political managerial function was a most uncomfortable admission after Bakunin's vicious and often penetrating onslaught on Statism. Similarly, in post-revolutionary Russia, the Asiatic concept, previously used by Lenin himself about Russia, became once more politically disturbing, while Communist propaganda in the Orient was increasingly loth to mention Marx's view that foreign capitalist intrusion would produce the only genuine social revolution Asia had ever known. Wittfogel's work, and that of other Marxist supporters of the Asiatic concept, was declared politically harmful, and the 'feudal' treatment of Asian history, with its gross simplifications and falsifications, was trundled forth again.

All this, I trust, may do something to indicate how clear-sighted and how suggestive Wittfogel's book mostly is. If its main theme and its concept of managerial societies is not particularly new, that is, after all, largely because Wittfogel's previous works have done so much to force it to people's attention. And considering Wittfogel's Teutonic background and American 'sociological' environment, it is on the whole clearly and sometimes even powerfully written. Nevertheless, it is not the exciting book it might have been. Why?

The main fault, I think, lies in Wittfogel's method of bringing out the important features of hydraulic society. He works largely by logical deduction,

TWO CASTLES

kept as general as possible; that is, he sets up a model hydraulic society, analyses the logical implications, and then takes static cross-sections of actual societies to show that the features correspond. But the whole process is too static, and too decidedly not *in concreto*. Wittfogel's cross-sections are highly selective—he pulls the features he wants out of his society like a rabbit out of a hat, and always leaves us wondering what else was in the hat, and whether it mightn't eat the rabbit when the time comes. Certainly, Pharaonic Egypt, Sumer, Babylon, the Inca Empire and Hawaii all had certain features in common with Chou China, but are those features the important ones for understanding the development of those civilizations?

Elsewhere, I think, Professor Wittfogel has given us considerable grounds for thinking that these factors might well be the important ones. But in his latest book he has not paid sufficient regard to the fact that his categories are supposed to be above all explanatory, categories of development, dominant societal features that enable us to understand how and why those societies go on in time. *Oriental Despotism* rips these categories out of time, dissects the skeleton, (brilliantly, but quite statically) and leaves us to imagine the movement for ourselves. Yet that is precisely the task for which even the most cultured but non-expert readers of Wittfogel will be unfitted, and that is why they may well find exciting and suggestive categories becoming duller as they read on.

Eugene Kamenka

TWO CASTLES

Neville Braybrooke

RECENT publication by Penguin of Kafka's *The Castle* and of St Teresa's autobiography in new translations provides me with an opportunity to make 'the notes' for a comparison that has long been at the back of my mind. Indeed, with one breath Mr Cohen in his introduction to St Teresa's autobiography is speaking about her spiritual masterpiece, *The Interior Castle*, and with the next he is speaking about Kafka's world as represented in his novel, *The Castle*; but for all this nowhere does he treat of the saint and the novelist together.

St Teresa begins her spiritual treatise:

'While I was beseeching Our Lord today that He would speak through me, since I could find nothing to say and had no idea how to begin to carry out the obligation laid upon me by obedience, a thought occurred to me which I shall now set down, in order to have some foundation on which to build. I began to think of the soul as if it were a crystal made of a single diamond or of very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in Heaven there are many mansions. . . .'

These words say exactly what the writer means them to; she is preparing the way to elaborate her image of the soul as a castle, just as twelve centuries before St Augustine had referred to Heaven as a city.

Kafka's approach is quite different. He is not concerned with comparisons, and in one passage in his diaries he records that metaphors were one of the things which made him nearly despair of being a writer. For K, the central

character in *The Castle*, makes not a symbolic, but a real journey—a journey whose seven stages correspond with the seven mansions of *The Interior Castle*. During the course of it something happens to K, something of which the novelist makes the reader quite aware, and yet it is something of which K remains quite unaware *during the time that it is happening*. Kafka the narrator must not be confused with K, since there are continual hints that the author has a foreknowledge of his character's future actions which his character cannot have—'at least at the very outset', as the narrator subtly puts it on one page. For this novel, like *The Interior Castle*, is primarily concerned with the workings of Grace. Whereas St Teresa is interested in showing how by living a virtuous life Grace may be acquired, Kafka is interested in showing how it may affect a man's whole way of living—even if unapprehended by the beneficiary himself. The contrast between these views is one of time and place—between a united Catholic Christendom, such as existed in Spain during the sixteenth century, and a Central European climate, which has been one of growing scepticism since the turn of this century.

Kafka's castle is not modelled on the Hradschin which dominates Prague—although the fact that the local peasantry have always invested the Hradschin with a kind of omnipotent power may have played some part in the author's imagination when he also decided to make 'the castle' in his own novel act as a Seat of Grace. But he was careful that there should be no confusion between the magnificent medieval fortress that stands guard over Prague and his own fictional group of buildings, 'closely packed together . . . and of one or two storeys: [indeed] if K had not known that it was a castle he might have taken it for a little town. There was only one tower as far as he could see, and whether it belonged to a dwelling or a church he could not determine. Swarms of crows were circling it.'

If there is an ambiguity at this stage as to what role the castle is to play, the ambiguity is in the mind of K; he is only aware at first of a hierarchy in the castle's servants, a hierarchy that may be secular and perhaps bureaucratic, or ecclesiastical and perhaps celestial. Doubt drives him on, unaware of what he may discover, since 'man cannot live without an enduring faith in something indestructible within him': at least, at the outset, that would seem the indirect purpose of the journey. Moreover, since revelation never comes by forcing, it is only at the moment when K ceases to struggle, hands himself over as it would appear, that 'other forces' take command of the situation.

From then on his distrust of everyone turns to acceptance, his doubt of everything to faith.

Now all this, unwittingly, has been brought about by one man's relationship with a castle and its staff, a staff that is very strict in its observance that none shall step out of their appointed place in the social structure. It might be stated that man asks what he wants of life and that life in turn ultimately gives what is best for him. Certainly this is what befalls K, since there would seem to be benevolent forces at work on his journey whose presence he does not either accept or understand, but whose role resembles that of guardians. Some would add here the word angels—among them St Teresa—although Kafka in recording the journey of a man from agnosticism to faith can find no word, or words, that are precise enough to express the nature of the transition: it simply occurs—and a reader is left remembering how after two thousand years the theologians are still arguing about a satisfactory definition of Grace. That is why he does not write allegorically and liken Grace to the seat of a castle in the tradition of some of the early fathers and mystics (or of St Teresa herself), but presents instead a castle in a novel which acts as a Seat of Grace.

TWO CASTLES

Spain has always been proverbially famous for its castles and when St Teresa makes her 'interior castle' an equivalent of the soul she has in mind a castle not built on this earth but *in the air*. On the other hand, 'the castle' which Kafka makes K seek is not set in the air but earthbound and surrounded by *air*. Which is a vital distinction. For what a reader must do is first follow K's journey, seeing the castle through his eyes, and then on re-reading the story, he must try and forget the castle and concentrate more on that enveloping insubstantiality which seems so alive with mysterious birds ('swarms of crows') and celestial presences ('other forces'). But the book is only a novel, some may retort; yet none the less it is the kind of novel which demands a concentration of effort similar to that which a reader should be prepared to give to a spiritual classic. For authors such as St Teresa and Kafka do not make concessions; they ask to be read with an inner silence and spirit of contemplation such as they themselves experienced when writing. Moreover, if this degree of concentration is given to the air that surrounds K's castle, to the Grace that enfolds it like the Grace which upholds that 'interior castle' which St Teresa calls the soul, then a geography is established, not perhaps easy to chart, but at least as real to these two writers as the air that they breathed. A castle whether on the ground, or in the mind, is inconceivable without air. Yet once air is accepted, then at that moment all things become possible.

Neville Braybrooke

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ENCOUNTER magazine, in association with INTERNATIONAL P.E.N., is offering the following prizes for the best English translation of short stories originally written in one of the Asian, Arabic or African languages:

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1. Not more than one story by any author will be considered. It may be submitted either by the author or the translator, with the full approval of the other. The author may not be his own translator. The length should be between 2,500 and 5,000 words.
2. The story submitted should not have previously been published in English translation, although a translation already commissioned for publication in book form not earlier than March 31st, 1959, will be eligible. *The translation only should be submitted*, although a version in the original language should be available for the judges if asked for.
3. The following particulars should be clearly set out on an accompanying sheet (not a letter): The title of the story; the language from which translated; length; name, address and nationality of the author; name, address and nationality of the translator; and an assurance that the translation will not have appeared elsewhere before March 31st, 1959.
4. Entries should be typewritten and addressed to ENCOUNTER (Story Competition), 25 Haymarket, London, S.W.1, to arrive not later than October 31st, 1958. Entries cannot be acknowledged and will only be returned if accompanied by a suitable self-addressed envelope and adequate postage (British Postal Order or International Reply Coupons).
5. The winning stories will be published in ENCOUNTER, which shall also have first option on any other entries considered suitable for publication at current rates. The judges reserve the right to withhold the prizes if, in their opinion, no suitable entries are received.
6. The judges cannot enter into correspondence about entries and their decision is final.

REVIEWS

ALEXANDER G. KOROL:
*Soviet Education for Science and
Technology*
Wiley, New York. 95s. od.

Now that total war is suicide it is peace which is the continuation of policy by other means. Years ago the Kremlin set out to beat the West at its own game and now it is confident that, given a decade or so of 'peaceful co-existence', its massive programme of scientific and technological training will give Russia (not to mention China) an economic potential surpassing that of the West. The geopolitical consequences that this achievement would have are clear enough.

Mr Korol's book comes from the Centre for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has no illusions about his subject: 'In the context of the war long ago declared by Communism against the free democratic societies, but still not taken seriously enough by many of the intended victims, the Soviet Union has committed the major part of its productive effort, skill and talent of its people to the maintenance and increase of Communist capability for the aggressive expansion of Communist power. It has mobilized a major share of the social and economic resources of the areas it controls to advance its technological means towards achieving this objective. It is this objective which the Soviet educational system is ultimately designed to serve.'

The book is to be seen against the background of recent works dealing with broader aspects of Russian 'education'—a combination of rigorous technical training and pervasive Communist indoctrination. It deals with the universal ten-year schools (for ages seven to seventeen) and refers to the recently instituted boarding schools designed to bring secondary education under 'completely controlled conditions'. The technicums and other sub-professional

schools are described and most of the book is concerned with undergraduate training in the technical institutes and universities and with the graduate training given in these and in the numerous research institutes. It is the product of a painstaking analysis of a vast amount of factual information including Russian textbooks, examinations, syllabuses, and so on.

Mindful of current criticism of the effectiveness of American education he emphasizes that his book is not meant to be a comparison of the Russian and American systems. Rightly he insists that the two should not be compared as if they were similar systems with similar aims. However erroneous the prevalent American philosophy of education may be (and Mr Korol is for 'a self-generated scale of moral, ethical, aesthetic, and social values as standards of personal and group behaviour') nevertheless America is trying to educate her people whereas Russia is training a new sort of army for a new sort of war.

In recent years comparisons of the quantity and, as far as possible, the quality of technological manpower in Russia and in the West have been publicized. Mr Korol's findings substantiate the general conclusions but he maintains that such comparisons are not the main point. The Soviet government trains only as many technologists as it considers it needs for its purposes and directs them to go where it wants them. The central fact is that the Kremlin has much greater control over its immense intellectual and other resources than have Western governments. This is the unpleasant reality that the democracies must face. The democratic way of life has many virtues but they are all pointless if it lacks the primitive virtue of being able to survive. The mentality of the milk bar economy is not good enough.

R. M. Gascoigne

REVIEWS

E. L. WHEELWRIGHT:

Ownership and Control of Australian Companies

The Law Book Co of Australasia. Sydney. 42s. od.

It is a difficult matter to review a book as condensed as this. The person capable of doing it would also be capable of remaking it for a Reader's Digest book.

Mr Wheelwright, in over two hundred pages, has demonstrated that Australian companies have passed generally into the control of managers. That is to say that Burnham's American management revolution has *sotto voce* also taken place here. However, let no one think that the manager of a big company like BHP, for example, has it all his own way. He is not faced at the annual meeting with a group of timid shareholders whose only right is to vote in favour of everything proposed by the oligarchy. On the contrary he has to present his proposals to a group of some thirty hardfaced managers of trusts, banks and insurance companies who hold over fifteen per cent of the shares, and who turn up at every meeting. Thus the countervailing power—to use Galbraith's colourful term for it—is present in every shareholders' meeting.

If the manager of the trust or insurance company has failed to show up at a meeting when a decision was taken that would affect his shareholders unfavourably, he can expect that another hardfaced group of managers will meet him at his shareholders' meeting. He will have to talk fast if he has to talk *himself* out of a loss and to talk *them* into facing their manager, shareholders, with a loss, and so ad infinitum.

The little shareholder, who does have a very large stake in Australian industry, can sit back with the happy assurance that all is for the best in the best of capitalist worlds. Since the managers of trusts are compelled to attend, why should he upset his

golf and his digestion? Anyway, the manager of a trust can read a balance sheet so much more intelligently.

If the manager of the Australian Newsprint Mills, for example, tells the manager of The Commonwealth Fertilizers and Chemicals Ltd Combined Staff and Provident Fund that he can go soak his head, the aggrieved manager can throw no less than ten thousand shares on the market. Think of the panic, since the shares are not even now 'granted for quotation' on the Sydney Stock Exchange.

Mr Wheelwright himself says that 'the unloading of large blocks of shares can materially affect the market price'. So if nothing else will keep managers attentive to the needs of their shareholders for dividends, this influence of other managers will bill the bill.

Aside from the philosophy on the influence of share ownership, the book devotes nearly one hundred pages to listing the names of actual owners of shares. This can serve as a reference for checking on the boasts of one's friends or the statements of young marriageable men on their family fortune. The book lists only those families with more than ten thousand shares, but who would want a prospective brother-in-law with less?

In fine, this book is a splendid reference for political orators. It also serves in a dual capacity as a substitute for a social register, one of Australia's greater lacks. No right-thinking family (or wrong-thinking family either, if it comes to that) can afford not to buy a copy.

L. R. Coleman

C. R. JURY:

Love and the Virgins and Poems
Wakefield Press. Adelaide. 21s. od.

Icarus (1955) and now this volume provide a firm basis for judging the quality of C. R. Jury's work. When his second tragedy, *The Battle in the West*, is published and the satiric

REVIEWS

comedies, *The Administrator* and *The Sun in Servitude*, find a wider audience than their recent successful performance in Adelaide could reach, the full range of this writer can be appreciated. In time, if time still refines judgment, he will stand out among the best of Australian poets.

Love and the Virgins is a dramatic poem, 'tragical-comical-historical-pastoral'. The scene is Arcadia before the Trojan war, that country of the mind which poets are free to people with their subtlest and most delicate imaginings. The persons are divinities or gently born. The story is a love-story.

But perfect urbanity keeps the romantic scenes unsentimental; wise, comic irony tempers the idyllic scenes; Eros and earthy Silenus mock high-minded Artemis in a thoughtful delightful play. Is it an anti-Platonist's rejoinder to *Comus*?

Love and the Virgins, like much in this book, is a revision of early work and some slight weaknesses of conception and execution remain. Some will find the language still too feminine. Others may detect a forced quality in the passionate speeches. The later works cannot be so criticized.

The Poems, though various in kind, are united by their formal beauty. Epigram, song, idyll, hymn, ode, each is an achieved balance of shapely thought and living rhythm. The *Ode to Bacchus* begins:

Lyaeus, child of passionate Heaven,
I sing,
From Semele the Theban blossom bred,
Whom perilous lightning, hoarded in
her King,
Reluctant, long-importuned glory shed,
Burnt, not by love bestead:

Such care for music, desiring to deepen it, led to the composition of poems in strict quantity, a mode these sapphics justify:

Hardly, Michael, wrung from a chary
language
Not benign and soft to the Muse
requiring,

Slowly good sweet quantity comes to
cheer us
Barbarous authors.

Much we toil, not much, many think,
rewarded;
Pleased if here and there, in a tidy
garden,
After almost infinite horticulture,
Blooms the demure rose.

Much more than a demure rose is the hymn in asclepiads, though partial quotation breaks the rhythm:

Zeus, deep world unassessed, darkness
awake, truth irremovable,
Fount and being of all shapes that
arise, and are accorded, and
Fade: though none shall achieve thy
Truth that stands in eternity. . . .

The difficulties of composing for long in strict quantity and stress led to the working out of a new system of versification that combines dominant stress patterns with auxiliary patterns in quantity. Those aware both of the prosodic debility of free verse and of the temptation to rely on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century recipes for traditional rhythms will read, with interest at least, 'Philomela' and the Centenary Ode.

D. C. Muecke

THE NEW CAMBRIDGE MODERN HISTORY

I THE RENAISSANCE 1493-1520
edited by G. R. Potter

II THE OLD REGIME 1713-1763
edited by J. O. Lindsay

Cambridge University Press. 57s. gd. per volume.

The General Editor, Sir George Clark, was necessarily brought to consider some of the fundamental problems of the historian's craft by the fact that his new series is to supersede the old, dull, worthy volumes produced under Lord Acton's leadership. Acton worked as the representative of the high tide of 'scientific' or 'factual' historical scholarship. When he planned the original *Cambridge Modern History* he hoped it would serve as a 'chart

and compass for the coming century'—not because it would give any particular interpretations of events, but precisely because it was to be a purely factual record of what really had happened. This chart and compass image is an odd one when one thinks about it: for surely the coming century was not embarked to sail over the waters of any past century, and its factual chart must be the contemporary scene *wie es eigentlich ist*, not the past *wie es eigentlich geschehen*. While it is useful to have a factual knowledge of the past, it may still be that what the historian can most do to help us is to interpret the past for us—even if he runs a considerable risk of being wrong. Acton required of his contributors that they should abolish their individual convictions from the pages, and stick to pure fact. Today we are more aware of the self-deception that can creep into attempts to give an impartial treatment of pure fact. For historical 'facts' themselves are for the most part rather complex constructs, not elements discovered by a kind of brute empiricism. And the selection, arrangement, and 'lighting' of facts involves a labour of interpretation from which convictions and 'values' are never absent.

Consequently, the new editor accepted the inexpugnable element of 'values' (which is the question-begging modern term for a whole range of supra-empirical principles of judgment) in the work of contributors: 'They must be content to set out their own thought without reserve and to respect the differences which they cannot eradicate.'

Actually, the contributors do not do this either—unless we are to assume that when set out without reserve their thoughts are very few, fairly conventional, and somewhat jejune. A general work of this kind is not the occasion for full-scale interpretation. Rather it calls for a minimizing of 'value'-judgment.

The student wants an account which he knows must be the view of an individual mind, but which he hopes will be the sort of view which the majority of competent scholars would broadly accept so far as it goes. This is what the contributors appear to have done, and done successfully.

The result is a work which will not excite the general reader, who has a perhaps excessive appetite for interesting views and novel judgments in history, but one which has solid merit as a work of reference.

James McAuley

HAROLD GATTY:
Nature is Your Guide
Collins. London. 21s. od.

It is a truism that modern urban man fails to develop his power of observation. It is ironical that with all his scientific background he should have resorted to postulating a mysterious sixth sense in primitive people in order to explain their capacity to find their way in uncharted and untracked country. Harold Gatty's posthumously published book *Nature is Your Guide* demonstrates clearly that the supposed sixth sense is no more than the application of the very scientific habits of detailed observation, hypothesis and deduction.

An example, made topical by Thor Heyerdahl's explanation of Pacific colonization in terms of currents, is Gatty's very convincing argument that the primitive voyagers found their way to new lands by observing and following the paths of migrating birds.

The fact that we do not necessarily welcome the disappearance of the need to cope with our natural environment is attested by many things, the continued growth of Scouting, the popularity of bird watching, the increasing use of our natural waterways by amateur sailors, and the quite extraordinary variety of people who may be encountered.

in remote parts of the Australian bush on any holiday weekend. For those who pursue such activities, and for those who for more urgent reasons assume the task of finding their way by land, sea or air, *Nature's Your Guide* provides a practical manual of pathfinding by use of the unaided senses.

But even armchair adventurers will find fascination in the information that a lost person walks in a circle primarily because one leg is shorter than another, causing a constant personal deviation which can be measured and allowed for; that a traveller nearly always prefers to pass on the right side of an obstacle rather than the left; that certain Greenland Eskimos could find their home fjord in a fog by recognizing the individual song of the particular snow-bunting nesting on their headland; that almost any tree gives some indication of the points of the compass; and that a little knowledge of the habits of sea birds can enable

a seafarer to deduce both the direction and the distance of land.

For those who are not interested in the foregoing, there is a chapter on 'Finding your Way in Towns'.

J. H. Wootten

ALFRED DEAKIN:

The Crisis in Victorian Politics, 1879-1881

Melbourne University Press. 25s. od.

It has sometimes been suggested that political biography is an important element in forming and preserving a tradition of statesmanship.

Australian literature is weak in this respect. The political biography which we can claim is, with few exceptions, marred by hysterical hagiolatry or inflated by the puffings and blowings of national pride.

This extremely short memoir, now published for the first time, is less impressive, even as biographical or historical material, than the editors,

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J. A. La Nauze and R. M. Crawford, in their careful Introduction, suggest.

It tells the story of Deakin's unexpected entry into political life at the suggestion of David Syme of the Melbourne *Age*, of the whirlwind campaign for West Bourke, in which he was successful, of his maiden speech and dramatic resignation at the end of it because of a slight technical irregularity in the West Bourke election, of his defeat at a new election and of his final success in 1880. This biographical strand is woven into the considerable historical pattern created by the struggle to reduce the powers of the Upper House in Victoria.

All this is told with considerable verve and descriptive power, but with no very conspicuous insight into the motives of men or the causes of movements. Indeed, the memoir's most compelling and interestingly original passage is a digression in which Deakin sets down his own idea of the personal process which allowed him to be drawn from the drudgery of teaching and journalism into political life.

He writes: 'To have spent my days in retirement without public appearances, public speaking or public notice under a veil of anonymity and largely in communion with my inner self in the presence of Nature, represents the dream cherished by me with but slight alteration from boyhood up to the hour of writing. It is unnecessary to add that this being denied, I am far more than content for myself with the path I have been obliged to follow, which I retrace in memory not only without bitterness but with gratitude.'

The constant overtone in all Deakin writes of himself is that 'the thin thread of individual ability' which he felt he possessed, was insufficient to bind together the impulses of his own nature and that political life provided, if only partially, the opportunity of self-

expression he was unable to create for himself.

In this, the younger Deakin irresistibly suggests the younger Gladstone. Future biography may indicate further and more important similarities. The present memoir however, strengthens this reviewer's belief that the full study of Deakin's life is an urgent need and will reveal a creative and independent intellect with capacities of statesmanship unequalled in Australian politics.

Marley Stephens

F. M. TODD:

Politics and the Poet—a Study of Wordsworth

Methuen, London. 41s. 6d.

A poet, like any other author, can hardly avoid having political opinions, and these, influenced inevitably by the events of his lifetime, will naturally affect the content and perhaps even the style of his writing. The careful analysis of the philosopher will probably be absent; the literary author may well be more subject to emotion than to logic, but that does not mean that his views on politics are worthless. Generally one might expect to find a belief in liberty, and an opposition to those who appear to endanger it, from whatever quarter such a threat may come; for the author, like any other intellectual, must feel that without freedom of expression, literary talent cannot flourish.

The change of Wordsworth's political opinions from the radicalism of his youth to the conservatism of his old age is notorious. Professor Todd suggests that this was largely the result of 'an increasingly deferential attention to his own poetry and to the ideals it embodied', but the evidence suggests that the other factor he mentions, 'his experience of English and French politics between 1790 and 1830', was perhaps more important. Certainly Wordsworth was a disciple of

nature'; we would expect him to have disliked many aspects of life in the growing industrial towns, and possibly therefore, the whig-liberal party so often associated with industry and commerce. But one cannot avoid the impression that his political views were strongly influenced by his personal experiences. His unhappy childhood, his unsympathetic guardians, his legal encounter with Lord Lonsdale, all contributed to his youthful radicalism, his hatred of the old regime, and his enthusiasm at the outbreak of the French Revolution. His break with the Whigs first arose from a difference in views of Napoleon, and from Wordsworth's refusal to recognize the possibility of the dictator making and honestly trying to maintain peace; later he feared the extremism of the English radicals, when they seemed to threaten revolution in England in their desire to achieve political reform. As a 'romantic' he was out of sympathy with the Whig philosophy, or at least the utilitarian elements of it; attached to 'nature', he became less and less concerned with political questions as he hoped for an 'internal' regeneration in the spirit of man. But how did this feeling develop? We may agree that his early sympathy with the Revolutionary cause was largely emotional and that his longing for international peace played a large part in it, but were these hopes due to a love of nature? Professor Todd does not explain how these might have been derived, and one might as well believe that Wordsworth's growing emphasis on the 'spiritual' side of man grew out of the disappointment of his early hopes for political reform, as that the reverse was the case. This change would naturally lead to a growing conservatism, especially when danger of mob-rule seemed to threaten.

Professor Todd appears over-anxious to stress Wordsworth's consistency. Why should he not have

changed his views, in his desire for liberty? The question surely need only be, where is the greater threat to freedom in this period, from government or from the mob? And although we may feel that Wordsworth exaggerated the dangers of revolution in England between 1800 and 1840, we must agree that his fears were shared by many others of his generation, and his reaction to them can be readily understood. There is no need to postulate a growing readiness to attend to the ideals of his own poetry; for indeed Professor Todd suggests that his ideals themselves gradually changed, as he turned to Nature 'in despair of man', and here he found 'new faith . . . so different from his earlier enthusiasm'. The reaction of the poet to what he thought was a threat to freedom, arising from a threat to society itself, is nothing necessarily to be ashamed of, or to need all the excuses which Professor Todd brings forward. His book provides a sympathetic account of Wordsworth's political evolution, even if he seems over-anxious to make sure, like Dr Johnson, that the Whig Dogs should not have the best of it.

A. G. L. Shaw

KARL ADAM:

The Christ of Faith

Burns & Oates. London. 44s. gd.

This is a massive work of 359 pages by a distinguished German Catholic whose work is read with attention and respect by Christians of other communions, and it is excellently translated. It is a serious theological study of Jesus Christ as true God and true Man, and in no sense a 'popular' exposition. He begins with a chapter about Christ and the Church: 'if there were no living Church in which Christ's influence perpetuated itself, the Gospels and Epistles would be for us but a dead letter, breathing no life' (p. 5); and this is a theme which

is being greatly emphasized today also on the Protestant side of Christendom, as in the Swedish Bishop Nygren's recent book *Christ and His Church*. Then, after a rapid summary of the classical working out of the doctrine about Christ, of which the two great monuments are the Nicene Creed and the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, he proceeds to a detailed study of the New Testament evidence, and then to a reasoned discussion of the great and deep problems involved in a human life which was that of God in true manhood.

It will be well here to give one illustration of Karl Adam's method, in the specially difficult question of our Lord's human knowledge. Jesus Christ was true Man, sharing our temptations; did He share our ignorance? We think of His words as words of Divine wisdom, words of deepest insight into the real truth of things. But as regards knowledge of empirical facts, was His knowledge limited in the same way as ours is? This question comes to a point in His words about the time of the Second Advent: 'Of that day and that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father' (Mark 13.32). This saying has been a trouble to the theologians, who have often said that He did know but would not say. Karl Adams says: 'Who is right here, Jesus or the theologians? . . . If, in answering this question, we had only the choice between Jesus and the theologians, we should know at once whose side to take. Where Jesus speaks out clearly, it is the theologians' task to interpret, not to misinterpret. And where they obviously misinterpret, we must for Jesus' sake refuse to follow them' (pp. 271-2). But then he has to say that the question must not be wrongly simplified, and mentions three instances of theologians who have done so. Finally he suggests an answer himself; that the time of the

Advent was not part of our Lord's actual knowledge as Man, because it was not part of His Mission to tell such things; therefore He would not think about them, and so would not know them. Our Lord's word condemns in advance all speculations among Christians concerning 'the day and the hour'. As for His human knowledge, it may be suggested that theologians, including Karl Adam, have often been over-ready to define things which we have not been told and which are strictly beyond us.

Gabriel Hebert

FRANK O'CONNOR (editor):

Modern Irish Short Stories

Oxford University Press. London. 10s. 6d.

Mr O'Connor, introducing this one of the latest volumes in *The World's Classics* series, claims that the Irish short story is a 'distinct art form'. I doubt it. I doubt it because every special feature he claims for the Irish short story can be found passim in Australian usage. He instances Sommerville and Ross's *Lisheen Races* as distinctively Irish, yet smooth out the dialect and you have a sequence of events centred about a country race meeting that reminds you of Steele Rudd's riotously funny yarns. Possibly much of Ireland came imperceptibly into Australia—the tall story (exaggerated now with us in that Speewah stuff) hyperbole, leg-pulling, tea-drinking, pub-crawling in the cities and a certain widespread improvidence.

This is a delightful selection. One is permitted to criticize, one must concentrate upon the last two rather experimental pieces—Plunkett's *Eagles and the Trumpet* and Elizabeth Bowen's *Summer Night*. The former starts off delightfully enough and becomes troubled with pub-crawling and whoring (very realistically done one almost vomits with Sweeney) then disintegrates into a 'write-the-conclusion - for - yourself' type o

interesting * intriguing * informative

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ending. Miss Bowen ends likewise, but more weakly. Both, it seems to me, have tried to put novels into a recalcitrant form, omitting some essentials. Realism passes into surrealism, i.e., vivid details loom larger than they should if perspective and unity is to be preserved. In *Summer Night*, for example, a young girl of ten or so goes round the house prodigiously: in the dark 'in her skin', after adorning it à la aborigine with coloured chalk and painting her behind not sky-blue like the devil in the proverb, but. . . . Well, anyhow, her pranks are not integrated into the story. In fact, one begins to doubt where the story is. Either a novel was required, or an imaginative essay on Midsummer Madness, not particularly Irish.

George Moore, Corkery, Joyce (*The Dead*, 53 pages, a f.a.q. novelette lifted out of time by a wonderful ending), James Stephens, O'Flaherty (thrice represented—*Three Lambs* is an exquisite performance), O'Faolain, O'Connor himself (very moving in *Guests of the Nation* and giving us a flawless diamond in *My Oedipus Complex*, perhaps the best in the book with its laughter and deep child psychology), Mary Lavin, Eric Cross (*The Jury Case* is delightful), McMahon, McLaverty—all show to advantage among their peers, the world's classical short stories.

Martin Haley

CLIVE SANSOM:
The Cathedral
Methuen. London. 10s. 6d.

Mr Sansom's intention, he tells us, is 'to build an English cathedral and to suggest the life it held, particularly in the Middle Ages'.

He leaves us, certainly, with a clear sense of the magnificent communal effort that the building of a cathedral entailed, of the autochthonous character of medieval religion, and of the simplicity (in the best sense) of the Christian life

REVIEWS

in the Middle Ages. But he does very little to force upon us the relation between this and modern life, and I would say that unless verse has an appeal to a contemporary adult audience, it remains only an interesting curiosity. In reading Mr Sansom, one is all the time reminded of Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, where, however, the presentness of the past is so much more vivid. Much of Mr Sansom's sequence is similar to the various parts of Eliot's play, but the difference in quality only serves to define Mr Sansom's limitations.

Still, this is a severe yardstick to judge any verse by. Mr Sansom's book is obviously designed for use by school children, in verse-speaking classes. There, as versified history, it will be most useful—especially as it is free of the more vulgar errors about medieval life. The language is mostly adequate for its freight of thought and emotion, rarely striking though never tasteless, but tends rather to lack vitality.

G. K. W. Johnston

C. A. HACKETT:

Rimbaud

Bowes & Bowes, London. 17s. 6d.

This short study is a model of interpretation and criticism. It presents in his true value and significance the youth who between the ages of fifteen and twenty wrote the most powerful and disturbing poetry in French literature since Baudelaire.

MOUNI SADHU:

In Days of Great Peace

Allen & Unwin, London. 30s. od.

Ramana Maharshi was one of the most revered of the modern spiritual masters of India, and one of the best known to Westerners because he gave them access to his presence. Mouni Sadhu, of Polish origin and now living in Australia, was one of his Western disciples. In this book he does not attempt a full exposition of Maharshi's teaching but attempts to give the reader some idea of the influence the master had upon him and of his experiences in following the master's spiritual method of self-questioning.

NEW CONTRIBUTORS

PETER A. HUNT

is Senior Designer of the Publicity Directorate of the Department of Trade, and a Past National President of the Society of Design for Industry.

M. K. E. READ

an anthropologist on the staff of the Australian School of Pacific Administration has for the past two years been a visiting Associate Professor at the University of Washington.

BRIAN O'BRIEN
JEREMY BECKETT

is a physicist now working with ANARE.
has done research among the mixed-blood Aborigines of Western NSW while completing post-graduate work at the Australian National University.

TOM BASS

is well-known for his work in the field of civic art. As well as panel nearing completion for Melbourne University's Wilson Hall he has done sculpture for Sydney University and the University of Technology, and has on hand projects for the ICI building and the Herald building in Sydney.

FRANK KEANE

is a former cellarmaster of the Wine and Food Society and a member of the Gourmet Society.

C. SEMMLER

is in charge of TV programmes for the ABC and has written extensively on James Joyce in literary journals and for radio.

EUGENE KAMENKA

is a political philosopher at present teaching at the University of Malaya.

NEVILLE BRAYBROOK

is an English author and critic.

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